

# *Libertarian Communist Review*

Putting the record straight on Bakunin

The role of a revolutionary organisation

From Primitive to Libertarian Communism

**20p**

# Editorial

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After a lapse of two years, the LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST REVIEW appears again.

We regard its appearance as an important development in the field of libertarian thought and action.

The LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST REVIEW is not intended to be a magazine for mass-produced dogma. We intend to look at the history and theory of the anarchist and libertarian communist movement in a critical way. We hope to examine the flaws and inadequacies in the writings of the most noted libertarian socialist thinkers, and we intend to conduct a critical reappraisal of Marx and Marxist thinkers, and of the theory and praxis of left communist and libertarian socialist movements that run parallel with the anarchist movement.

Above all, we hope to rejuvenate and advance libertarian communist theory in the context of the present and the future.

It was probably true to say that the first LCR was launched before the libertarian communist movement was capable of supporting it. This was at the same time as the development of the Organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists (now the Anarchist Workers Association) with its struggle to establish the skeleton of a national organisation and a monthly newspaper.

The need for greater theoretical discussion and development as the precondition for further advance and material and political resources now enable us to renew publication.

We make no bones about the REVIEW being an integral part of the work of the AWA but this does not mean we shall exclude non-members from its pages. This is not due to any confused view that all ideas are valid or deserve publicising but because part of the work of the libertarian communist organisation is to force developments, by its activities and its arguments within both the broader libertarian and the socialist movements.

We welcome contributions from members of the AWA, from sympathisers and from comrades in other libertarian socialist groupings. Send manuscripts (typed double space on one side of the paper please) to LCR Editorial c/o AWA, 13 Coltman Street, Hull, Humberside.

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The following text is a translation from the French. It comes from *Solidarité Ouvrière*, the monthly paper of the Alliance Syndicaliste Révolutionnaire et Anarcho-syndicaliste. We have many criticisms of syndicalism, and this

includes its anarcho-syndicalist variant.

However, the ASRAS, in its reassessment of the libertarian movement, its commitment to revolutionary class politics and to a materialist dialectic, represents one of the more worthwhile and progressive libertarian groups in

France, along with the Organisation Communiste Libertaire and the Collectif pour un Union des Travailleurs Communiste Libertaire.

Future issues of *LCR* will contain critiques of anarcho-syndicalism.

# putting the record straight on Mikhail Bakunin

On the eve of the centenary of Bakunin, the return of all the gross stupidities which have been said about Bakunin requires a considerable work. Without hesitation whatsoever, the prize for falsification goes to Jacques Duclos, the former head of the PCF, who has devoted a huge book of several hundred pages to the relationship between Marx and Bakunin, which is a masterpiece of fiction.

Now is the time to compile a catalogue of falsifications that surround Bakunin. For if Duclos holds — with Marx himself — the sad privilege of the thought of Bakunin, the anarchists are unrivalled in being his greatest unconscious falsifiers. Of the things in common that the two leaders of the First International have, the foremost is perhaps that their thought has been misrepresented in an identical way by their own disciples. We wish here to follow the development of this misrepresentation of Bakunin's positions.

Later, we will explain what we think to be his true theory of revolutionary action.

Bakunin continually moves between the mass action of the proletariat and action of organised revolutionary minorities.

Neither of these two aspects of the struggle against capitalism can be separated: however, the libertarian movement after the death of Bakunin divided into two tendencies which emphasised one of the two points while neglecting the other. The same phenomenon can be found in the Marxist movement with the reformist social democrats in Germany and the radical and Jacobin social democrats in Russia.

In the anarchist movement, one current advocates the development of mass organisation, exclusively acting within the structures of the working class, and arrives at a state of apoliticism completely foreign to the ideas of Bakunin; another current refuses the very principle of organisation as this is seen as the beginnings of bureaucracy: they favour the setting up of affinity groups within which individual revolutionary initiative and the action of example will facilitate the passage without transition to an ideal communist society, where everyone will produce according to their his/her ability and will consume according to his/her need: joyful work and taking from the common store.

The first current advocated the action of the mass of workers within a structured organisation, collectivisation of the means of production and the organisation of

these into a coherent whole, preparation of the workers for social transformation.

The second current completely refused authority and the discipline of organisation; tactically this is seen as temporisation with capital. This current defines itself in an essentially negative way: against authority, hierarchy, power and legal action. Its political programme is based in the concept of communal autonomy, directly inspired by Kropotkin, in particular *The Conquest of Bread*. This current triumphed in the Congress of the CNT at Saragossa in 1936, whose resolutions expressed misunderstanding of the economic mechanisms of society, scorn for economic and social reality. The Congress developed in its final report "The confederal concept of libertarian communism", founded on the model of organisational plans of the future society which flourished in socialist literature of the 19th century. The foundation of the future society is the free commune. Each commune is free to do what it wishes. Those which refuse to be integrated outside the agreements of "convivencia colectiva" with industrial society could "choose other modes of communal life, like for example, those of naturists and nudists, or they would have the right to have an autonomous administration outside the general agreements".

In today's parlance, one could say that the followers of Bakunin can be divided

in one "right wing deviation" which is traditional anarcho-syndicalism, and one "leftist deviation" which is anarchism. The first one emphasises mass action, economic organisation and methodology. The second one hangs on to the objectives, "the programme" quite independent of immediate reality. And each of these currents claims for itself — by the way very frequently — Bakunin.

We have distinguished four principal misrepresentations of Bakunin's thought:

**SPONTANEISM** From time to time, Bakunin seems to sing the praises of spontaneity of the masses; at other times he affirms the necessity of mass political direction. In general anarchists have clung to the first aspect of his thought, and completely abandoned the second. In reality, Bakunin said that what the masses lacked in order to emancipate themselves was organisation and science, "precisely the two things which constitute now, and have always constituted the power of governments" (*Protest of the Alliance*). "At the time of great political and economic crisis, when the instinct of the masses, greatly inflamed, opens out to all the happy inspiration, where these herds of slave-men manipulated, crushed, but never resigned, rebel against the yoke, but feel themselves to be disoriented and powerless because they are completely disorganised, ten, twenty or thirty men, well-intentioned and well-organised

amongst themselves, and who know where they're going and what they want, can easily carry with them a hundred, two hundred, three hundred or even more" (*Oeuvres* 6, 90).

Later on, he says, similarly, that in order that the minority of IWMA can carry with it the majority, it is necessary that each member should be well versed in the principles of the International.

"It is only on this condition," he says "that in times of peace and calm will he be able to effectively fulfil the mission of propagandist and missionary, and in times of struggle, that of a revolutionary leader."

The instrument for the development of Bakunin's ideas was the Alliance of Socialist Democracy. Its mission was to select revolutionary cadres to guide mass organisations, or to create them where they didn't already exist. It was an ideologically coherent grouping.

"It is a secret society, formed in the heart of the International, to give it a revolutionary organisation, and to transform it and all the popular masses outside it, into a force sufficiently organised to annihilate political, clerical, bourgeois reaction, to destroy all religious, political, judicial institutions of states."

It is difficult to see spontaneism here. Bakunin only said that if the revolutionary minority must act within the masses it must not substitute itself for the masses.

In the last analysis, it is always the masses themselves that must act on their own account. Revolutionary militants must push workers towards organisation, and when circumstances demand it, they must not hesitate to take the lead. This idea contrasts singularly with what anarchism subsequently became.

Thus, in 1905, when the Russian anarchist Voline was pressed by the insurgent Russian workers to take on the presidency of the soviet of St Petersburg, he refused because "he wasn't a worker and in order not to embrace authority. Finally, the presidency fell to Trotsky. After Nossar, the first President, was arrested.

Mass action and minority revolutionary action are inseparable, according to Bakunin. But the action of revolutionary minorities only has sense when it is linked to mass working class organisation. If they are isolated from the organised working class, revolutionaries are condemned to failure.

"Socialism . . . only has a real existence in enlightened revolutionary impulse, in the collective will and in the working class's own mass organisations — and when this impulse, this will, this organisation, falls short, the best books in the world are nothing but theories in a vacuum, impotent dreams."

**APOLITICALISM** Anarchism has been presented as an apolitical, abstentionist movement by playing with words and giving them a different meaning to that which the Bakuninists gave them.

Political action, at the time, meant

parliamentary action. So to be anti-parliamentarian meant to be anti-political. As the marxists at this moment in time could not conceive of any other political action for the proletariat than parliamentary action, the denial of the electoral mystification was understood as opposition to every form of political action.

The Bakuninists replied to the accusation of abstentionism by pointing out that the term was ambiguous and that it never meant political indifference, but a rejection of bourgeois politics in favour of a "politics of work".

Abstention is a radical questioning of the political rules of the bourgeoisie's game.

"The International does not reject politics generally. It will certainly be forced to involve itself insofar as it will be forced to struggle against the bourgeoisie class. It only rejects bourgeois politics."

Bakunin condemned suffrage as an instrument of proletarian emancipation. He denies the use of putting up candidates. But he didn't elevate abstentionism to the level of an absolute principle. He recognised a degree of interest in local elections.

He even advised Gambuzzi's parliamentary intervention.

Nowhere in Bakunin will you find hysterical, vicious condemnations that became dear to anarchists after his death. Elections are not condemned for moral reasons, but because they risk prolonging the bourgeoisie's game. On this point, Bakunin proved to be right over and above the Marxists, right up to Lenin.

Anti-parliamentarianism was so unfamiliar to Marxists that from the start of the Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks — at least at the beginning — passed as Bakuninists in the European workers' movement.

#### THE REFUSAL OF AUTHORITY

The Bakuninists called themselves "anti-authoritarians". The confusion that arose as a result of the use of this word has been bitterly taken up since Bakunin's death. Authoritarian in the language of the time meant bureaucratic. The anti-authoritarians were simply anti-bureaucratic in opposition to the Marxist tendency.

The question then was not one of morals or character, and attitude to authority influenced by temperament. It was a political standpoint. Anti-authoritarian means "democratic". This last word existed at the time but with a different meaning.

Less than a century after the French Revolution, it described the political practices of the bourgeoisie. It was the Bourgeoisie who were "democrats".

When it was applied to the working class movement, the word 'democrat' was accompanied by 'social' or 'socialist', as in 'social democrat'. The worker who was a 'democrat' was either a 'social-democrat' or anti-authoritarian.

Later democracy and proletariat were

associated in the expression 'workers democracy'.

The anti-authoritarian tendency of the International was in favour of workers democracy; the tendency qualified as authoritarian was accused of bureaucratic centralisation.

But Bakunin was far from being opposed to all authority. His tendency allowed power if it came directly from the proletariat, and was controlled by it. He opposed the revolutionary government of the Jacobin type with insurrectionary proletarian power through the organisation of the working class.

Strictly speaking, this is not a form of political power but of social power.

After Bakunin's death, anarchists rejected the very idea of power. They only referred to the writings that were critical of power, and to a sort of metaphysical anti-authoritarianism.

They abandoned the method of analysis which came from real facts. They abandoned this as far as the foundation of Bakuninist theory based on materialism and historical analysis. And with it they abandoned the field of struggle of the working class in favour of a particular form of radicalised liberalism.

**THE CLASS MOVEMENT** Bakunin's political strategy did not depart from his theory of the relations between the classes. This should be established once and for all.

When the proletariat was weak, he advised against indiscriminate struggle against all the fractions of the bourgeoisie.

From the point of view of working class struggle, not all political regimes are equivalent. It is not a matter of indifference whether the struggle is against the dictatorial regime of Bismarck or the Tsar, or against that of a parliamentary democracy.

"The most imperfect of republics is a thousand times better than the most enlightened monarchy."

In 1870, Bakunin recommended using the patriotic reaction of the French proletariat and turning it into revolutionary war. In his *Letters to a Frenchman* he makes a remarkable analysis of the relationships between the different fractions of the bourgeoisie and the working class, and develops some months in advance and prophetically, what were to be the Paris and provincial Communes.

A thorough reading of Bakunin shows that his entire work consisted of constant enquiry, the relationships which could exist between the fractions which make up the dominant class and their opposition with the proletariat. His strategy for the workers movement is intimately linked with his analysis of these relationships.

In no case can it be separated from the historical moment in which these relationships take place. In other words, not every time is ripe for revolution, and a detailed understanding of the



relationship of forces between the bourgeoisie and the working class permits one at the same time not to miss suitable occasions and to avoid making tragic mistakes.

Bakunin's successors thought, on one hand, that there existed between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat a sort of immutable and constant relationship; on the other hand, that the relationship between the classes could not in any way enter into the scheme of things to determine revolutionary action. In the first case, they adopted a certain number of basic principles that were considered essential, and they gave themselves the objective of putting them into practice at some time or another in the future, whatever the circumstances of the moment.

Thus, the report of the Saragossa Conference already mentioned could have been written at any period. It stands absolutely outside time.

On the eve of the Spanish Civil War, the military problems for example, and agitation in the heart of the army, are dealt with one phrase: "Thousands of workers have been through the barracks, and are familiar with modern revolutionary warfare."

In the second case, they thought that the relationships of power between the classes were unimportant as the proletariat must act spontaneously. It is not related to any social determinism, but on the contrary to the hazards of exemplary action. The whole problem lies then in creating the right detonator.

The history of the anarchist movement

is full of these sensational actions, which were useless and bloody. In the hope of encouraging the revolution, they attacked the town-hall by the dozen: they made speeches, they proclaimed – very often in an atmosphere of complete indifference – about libertarian communism. They burnt local archives whilst waiting for the police to arrive.

Attentism or voluntarism, in either case the reference made to Bakunin is insulting. Very often, the libertarian movement has replaced the scientific method of analysis of relations between classes with magical incantations. The scientific and sociological nature of Bakunist analysis of social relations and political action was completely rejected by the libertarian movement.

The intellectual failure of the libertarian movement can be seen in the accusations of 'marxism' made about every attempt to introduce the slightest notion of scientific method in political analysis.

For example Malatesta said: "Today, I find that Bakunin was in political economy and in the interpretation of history, too Marxist. I find that his philosophy debated without any possibility of resolution, the contradiction between his mechanical conception of the universe and his faith in the effectiveness of free will over the destinies of man and the universe."

The "mechanical conception of the universe", that is in Malatesta's mind, is the dialectical method which makes of the social world a moving whole, about which one can determine general laws of

evolution. "The effectiveness of free will" is voluntarist revolutionary action. The problem can therefore be reduced to the relationship of mass action on society and the action of revolutionary minorities.

Malatesta is incapable of understanding the relationship of interdependence which exists between the human race and environment, between the social determinism of the human race and its capacity to transform the environment.

The individual cannot be separated from the environment in which he/she lives. Even though the individual is largely determined by environment, he/she can act upon it and modify it, provided the trouble is taken to understand the laws of evolution.

**CONCLUSION** The action of the working class must be the synthesis of the understanding of the "mechanics of the universe" – the mechanics of society – and "the effectiveness of free will" – conscious revolutionary action. There lies the foundation of Bakunin's theory of revolutionary action.

Two Bakunins do not exist – one which is libertarian, anti-authoritarian and who glorifies the spontaneous action of the masses; the other one 'marxist', authoritarian, who advocates the organisation of the vanguard.

There is only one Bakunin, who applies to different times in diverse circumstances principles of action which flow from a lucid understanding of the dialectic between the masses and the advanced revolutionary minorities.

## The role of a

# Revolutionary Organisation

THIS essay attempts to clarify what we libertarian communists and revolutionary anarchists mean by a revolutionary organisation. The definition of a libertarian revolutionary organisation is brought out in bold relief by its contrast to the Leninist and other authoritarian organisations; also by its organisational and political disagreements with the informal groupings of the traditional anarchists.

What truly distinguishes the Libertarian Communist organisation is its relationship with the working class, its theoretical elaboration of that relationship and a precise understanding of class

spontaneity. It becomes increasingly more important to attempt this clarification. The crisis in capitalism, on every level (economic, social, cultural and sexual) is reflected in the crisis in the Left organisations. These organisations duplicate ruling class values in their authoritarianism, their high degree of centralism, and the sheep-like submission of the rank and file to "omnipotent" and "all-wise" leaderships.

As the crisis in capitalism becomes more extreme, the related crisis in the left parties deepens, with schism after schism, opportunism and collaboration with the agents of the bosses, the Labour Party. It

is vital that a strong libertarian movement in all areas of social life is created in order for working people to defend themselves against the ever-more frenzied attacks of the capitalists, and to create a free self-managed society. To assist in the building of such a mass movement, a libertarian revolutionary organisation is necessary, an organisation that fights for the co-ordination of all anti-capitalist struggles. Such an organisation must have a structure that ensures permanent political debate and is controlled by the whole membership in a truly democratic way.

The libertarian revolutionary



organisation must expose the authoritarianism and elitism of the Leninist groups, and show that these groups do not in actual fact advocate socialism but a form of state capitalism.

#### CLASS SPONTANEITY

*"The emancipation of the workers must be brought about by the workers themselves." Declaration of the First International.*

*"The working class by itself can only attain trade union consciousness."*

Lenin, **What is to be done?**

A vast abyss of theory and practice lies between these two statements. We reject the Leninist concept which springs from the managerial strata and the intelligentsia and which seeks to drag the workers into a new form of oppression—the "workers" state.

We support the theory of working class spontaneity. It is important to understand what we mean by this; the concept has been distorted and misunderstood for too long. We don't take the "unhistorical" attitude that some traditional anarchists defend: that the working class springs into revolutionary activity with no links with previous struggles, and no previous agitation by revolutionary minorities. On the contrary, the work of revolutionaries over many years in taking part in, clarifying, and co-ordinating struggles in the working class and elsewhere, greatly helps the revolutionary process.

What we mean by working class spontaneity is, its abilities to take direct action on its own behalf, to develop new forms of struggle and of organisation. (This can be seen in every great revolutionary upsurge where working people have thrown up councils and committees independent of the "vanguards". During the struggles of the last few years, we have seen the flying picket used by hospital workers and miners, and the mass picket by miners and engineers at Salford Coke Depot.)

The activities of the working class have taken place regardless of, and sometimes against, the pontifications of the revolutionary 'elites'.

*"Let us put it quite bluntly: the errors committed by a truly revolutionary workers movement are historically far more fruitful and valuable than the infallibility of even the best central committee."* Rosa Luxembourg, **Organisational Questions of Russian Social Democracy.**

The experiences of working class life, at the point of production and elsewhere, and within the context of the ever changing ground of the class struggle, constantly lead to the development of ideas and action which question the

established order.

On the other hand, the ruling class seeks to reinforce and perpetuate the fragmentation of working class solidarity e.g. through control of the media and education, through racism and sexism. At the same time, different sections of the working class reach different degrees of consciousness.

The libertarian revolutionary organisation understands this. It also realises that the only possible proletarian revolution is one in which workers use mass action to take power and smash the apparatus of the ruling class, and that class itself. Any other revolution cannot by its nature be proletarian, and only leads to the formation of a new ruling class.

Understanding these facts, the anarchist organisation recognises it has several specific and important tasks to perform for the rest of the class.

#### IDENTIFICATION

The anarchist organisation must always see itself as part of the class. In order to strengthen this identification it seeks to develop and extend its influence in the class.

At the same time, the anarchist organisation must recognise itself as being in ideological advance of the class as a whole. Ideological advance should not be confused with practical advance for, as we have said, workers everywhere learn new modes of struggle and new forms of organisation that can benefit other workers. The anarchist revolutionary organisation must always be ready to learn from the class and should be expected to constantly revise its tactics with the unfolding situation. It should always realise it is not infallible, does not have all the answers all the time. It learns from the class as well as pointing out the lessons to the class. It is transformed as the working class is transformed in the revolutionary process.

Because it is part of the class and at the same time a distinctive organised tendency, the revolutionary organisation faces a contradiction in its relationship to other workers (of course, if it isn't part of the class then like some political groups it tends towards elitism, vanguardism, divorce from class reality. Theory and practice must be rooted in concrete conditions.).

There are dangers in these contradictions and the revolutionary anarchist must realise this—not only realise, but derive a practice from it. This contradiction cannot be completely removed until the triumph of a libertarian communist society.

#### TASKS OF THE ORGANISATION

In understanding that the revolution must be made by the self-activity of the working class, and recognising the above contradictions, the anarchist revolutionary organisation has a number of tasks to perform.

It must act as a propaganda grouping, ceaselessly and untiringly putting over the message that the working class must take power; the ways in which this can be done, ideas of libertarian organisation and examples of self-activity by workers.

It must search out and recall the history of past struggles, the successes and mistakes of these struggles, and must impart the lessons to be learnt to as many members of the class as it can reach. Working class history is deliberately obscured and excluded from the books by the ruling class. The revolutionary organisation has to rediscover these struggles in its efforts to develop class consciousness.

Whenever important developments (e.g. the Lip occupation at Besancon in Southern France) occur inside the class, the revolutionary organisation must spread the news through its links with organisations in other countries. The revolutionary organisation is internationalist; it seeks links with other

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by  
Jo Freeman

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In this pamphlet Jo Freeman attempts to sketch out an approach to organisation that would prevent the growth of elitist leaderships—which both highly centralised and highly informal groupings tend to produce. In revolution from the tyrannical structures of governments, unions and other organisations some anarchists have shied away from any meaningful consideration of self-organisation.

The Anarchist Workers Association played no part in the writing of this pamphlet but has found it highly applicable to the ineffectuality of anarchism in Britain in recent decades.

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groupings in order to increase class effectiveness.

But the organisation cannot see itself as solely a pedagogic group, e.g. Solidarity in this country. Above all, it is an assembly of activists. It must actively work in all the base organs of the class, rank and file groups, tenants associations, squatters associations, unemployed groups, womens and gay groups. It works inside the trade unions to build a strong rank and file movement. It rejects the notions of transforming the unions into revolutionary unions, because their top structure has been integrated into capitalism and acts as a mechanism to control the workers. It seeks to build links between unionised and non-unionised workers in the struggle for a movement at the base.

The organisation works inside the womens and gay groups, and sexual politics groups to radicalise and cause a break with liberalism, reformism and Leninism. It seeks to bring a recognition of the essential interconnection of sexual and class oppression. There can be no successful and complete sexual revolution without the triumph of the working class and the end of hierarchical society.

The organisation works for full democracy inside all these groupings and inside the class as a whole for self-activity, for the self-management by working people of every struggle and every facet of life. Only by building democratic organisations in the course of struggle can the proletariat hope to reach libertarian communism.

## THE LIBERTARIAN FRONT

The anarchist organisation realises that the social revolution cannot be won without a struggle at the point of production and the seizure of the means of production. However, it does not relegate the struggles in other areas of life (unemployed, sexual, environmental and ecological, cultural) to a secondary role. All these struggles are implicitly anti-capitalist, and all these issues are closely entwined. The questioning of one facet of capitalism can lead to the total rejection of the system. The militants of the organisation involved in these groups must seek to pinpoint in what ways the class system causes and/or perpetuates the problems that these groups are confronting.

It is vitally important that a 'libertarian front' of all these groups is built. Thus revolutionary work consists in part, of linking each area of struggle, bringing out all the latent anti-capitalist and libertarian tendencies to be found there.

Revolutionary anarchist militants seek a regroupment of all those who have

'globalised' their struggle, i.e. developed from fighting on one front against capitalism to a total critique.

This radical regroupment "the libertarian front" has to be striven for by the revolutionary organisation, and reflected in all its activities and publications. It must act as the driving force of such a grouping, constantly drawing in radicalised elements and hoping to build a mass movement.

When we say "driving force" we don't mean the Leninist approach of seeking to dominate such a movement by capturing positions etc.. We seek to minimise the dangers of the organisational contradiction and thus seek an intimate relationship with the mass movement. We don't want to take over such a movement.

What counts is not so much the numerical increase of the organisation but its development of the whole working class movement. We see our organisation as a means of communication and a weapon to be used by the working class.

## THE LEADERSHIP OF IDEAS

In opposition to the Leninist ideas of leadership, the anarchist organisation fights for the 'leadership of ideas within the class, through example and suggestion. This entails a clearer understanding of hierarchical society, the concept of self-managed struggle, and of Leninism.

In the struggle against Leninism and all forms of elitism, comes the realisation that a struggle of ideas must be waged at base level. This realisation is reflected in revolutionary anarchist theory and practice—the call for mandation of delegates, for mass decision making, for mass action.

## THE COMPOSITION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ORGANISATION

All sections of the working class who recognise the implications of struggle against capitalism and who subscribe to the libertarian communist project, will be united inside the organisation.

Elements of other classes and strata who see the need for the victory of the working class will also be gathered inside the organisation. Blue collar and white collar workers, elements of the working intelligentsia and scientific strata will work together in the realisation of the revolution. The anti-intellectual has a role to play in helping clarify positions inside the organisation, but s/he should never have a privileged position inside the organisation. In fact, the practicality of working people very often outstrips the intellectual in the grasp of theory and practice.

The revolution needs the impetus of a strong disciplined anarchist grouping to push it to its furthest possibilities. Precisely because of the absence of such a body, the instrument of revolutionary workers, past revolutions have fallen back. (We take into account all the other factors that have impeded the full realisation of the revolution.)

The revolutionary impetus must be strong enough to sweep the so-called 'vanguards' aside. In opposition to the 'vanguard' parties, the anarchist organisation should see itself as the 'guard-dog' of the revolution.

The revolutionary organisation will fight in the newly created workplace and neighbourhood councils on an ideological level against authoritarian groups. If the Leninists use force to destroy the workers gains, then the anarchist organisation must be fully prepared to combat them on a physical level, and to help other workers prepare for this eventuality. If they prove a threat to the revolution, the left 'leaderships' must be suppressed. It follows on from this that in the revolutionary period the anarchist organisation must call for and assist in the arming of all working people, for defence against all their enemies, capitalist and state capitalist, and the creation of workers' militia units under the control of the councils.

As the revolution advances, the relationship of the organisation to the class develops. A new level of unity is reached because the organisation grows as wide sections of workers see its perspectives as the way to a new and just society.

In the transitional period, the struggle against authoritarian groups and values becomes easier as they disintegrate. (Unless new ruling groups emerge in which case a new confrontation breaks out.)

It can be seen from this that the anarchist organisation does not dissolve itself immediately after the initial insurrectionary phase of the revolution. It must continue to grow, in order to aid the class towards libertarian communism. As this ideal becomes more and more possible, and obstacles to its achievement fall away, the organisation at the same time becomes more open and eventually disappears completely. (Unlike in Spain during the Civil War, the organisation remains principled and tight during the actual revolutionary crisis.)

The anarchist organisation should see itself in the future period as a tendency in the council movement advocating maximum democracy, and it should be prepared to exist with other tendencies, as only be a constant debate in the class can correct decisions be reached.

NICK HEATH



# From Primitive Libertarian

everything is shared in common; every morsel of food is divided among all present; and if the savage is alone in the woods, he does not begin eating before he has loudly shouted thrice an invitation to any one who may hear his voice to share his meal". "In short", continues Kropotkin, "within the tribe the rule of 'each for all' is supreme, so long as the separate family has not yet broken up the tribal unity." (*Mutual Aid*). The Biblical concept of "mine and thine" had not yet emerged.

Of Primitive Communism, Paul Lafargue in his *Evolution of Property from Savagery to Civilisation* comments:

"If the savage is incapable of conceiving the idea of individual possession of objects not incorporated with his person, it is because he has no conception of his individuality as distinct from the consanguine group in which he lives. The savage is enervated by such perpetual material danger, and compassed round with such constant imaginary terrors, that he cannot exist in a state of isolation; he cannot even form a notion of the possibility of such a thing. To expel a savage from his clan, from his horde, is tantamount to condemning him to death; . . . To be divided from his companions, to live alone, seemed a fearful thing to primeval man, accustomed to live in troops . . . Hunting and fishing, those primitive modes of production, are practiced jointly, and the produce is shared in common. . ."

When savages no longer lead a nomadic existence, and begin to build a permanent or semi-permanent dwelling-house, the house is generally not a private one as we understand it, but a common one. In such houses, provisions are held in common. Of a somewhat later period (the lower status of barbarism among some American aborigines), Lewis H. Morgan observes: "The syndasmian family was special and peculiar. Several of them were usually found in one house, forming a communal household, in which the principle of communism in living is practiced". (*Ancient Society*). Morgan mentions the Iroquois, with whom he lived, in particular. Later, with the emergence of the patriarchal family, households become the possession of single families. Nevertheless, throughout this period, land continues to be held in common.

But, continues Lafargue, "Very gradually did the idea of private property, which is so ingrained in and appears so natural to the philistine, dawn upon the human mind." Humanity underwent a long and painful process of development before arriving at private property in land. Indeed, the earliest distribution of the land was into pastures and territories of chase common to the tribe. The development of agriculture was a determining cause of the parcelling of common lands, often into small strips, sometimes on a permanent, but usually on an annual, basis. Lafargue notes that generally "landed property on its first establishment among primitive nations, was allotted to women". And regarding women within primitive communism, Frederick Engels wrote: "Communist housekeeping, however, means the supremacy of women in the house; just as the exclusive recognition of the female parent, owing to the impossibility of recognising the male parent with

Communism, to many people, is a dirty word. For much of this century, communism has been associated with Russia, a country which, in fact, has as its social system, not communism or socialism, but a particularly vicious and totalitarian form of State capitalism. Genuine socialists and libertarian communists have had an unenviable task of demonstrating that neither communism nor socialism exists – or has ever existed – in such countries as Russia, Cuba or even Yugoslavia. They have also had to explain that communism, in a primitive form, has indeed existed, as a form of society, for much of Humanity's existence on this planet, for perhaps two or more million years.

Since the demise of Primitive Communism, and the advent of private-property society, first of Chattel Slavery, then of Feudalism and, lastly, of Capitalism, "pockets" of peasant-communism, have persisted up until present times. Small communistic communities have been established, often by bourgeois and petit-bourgeois "intellectuals", with varying degrees of success. But throughout the centuries, the idea of communism, usually in an utopian or backward-looking form, has been advocated – and sometimes acted upon – by small idealistic sects. It was not until the middle of the last century, however, that individuals and political groups began to advocate communism as a new, advanced, type of society which should, indeed, would, take the place of capitalism; which would be a "higher" form of society; would be in the interest of the whole of the people, and not just a small class as is capitalism and, most importantly, would have to be brought about by the majority of the population – the workers – through a social revolution. Some of the modern advocates of communism, particularly in the earlier decades of the last century, have been dubbed "utopian" communists; others following Marx and Engels, have at least called themselves "scientific" communists and socialists, but have been accused of, in fact, being "authoritarian communists" by their anarchist opponents who, in many instances, began to advocate a form of non-authoritarian socialism or collectivism which, later, emerged as Libertarian Communism.

Briefly, I shall discuss, first, the system of Primitive Communism and then the ideas and theories of Utopian Communism, Authoritarian Communism and, lastly, Libertarian Communism as advocated by the more working-class elements within the so-called Anarchist Movement. Some non-anarchist groups also propagate libertarian communism as their objective. Their ideas are mainly based upon those of Morris.

## PRIMITIVE COMMUNISM

Rousseau's Noble Savage was largely a figment of his own imagination; nevertheless, the popular conception of the primitive male savage beating "his" wife's brains out with a club is equally false. The savage was neither violent nor competitive.

The basic characteristics of savagery was dependence upon "wild" sources of food supply, with all the disadvantages that this implies. Primitive people often suffered from malnutrition and the fear of starvation. Communities were small. Only at certain periods of the year was food plentiful. Such form of existence, however, gave rise to an embryonic, rudimentary, ethical code. "Private property", writes Grahame Clark in his *From Savagery to Civilisation*, "is limited to such things as weapons, digging sticks, collecting bags and personal trinkets, although in dividing meat, for example, the share of each individual is as a rule socially defined. Communal rights are generally recognized to extend over all the territories required to provide food for the group, territories within which all the seasonal wanderings are confined, and the limits of which are known to neighbouring groups." Of primitive communist, savage, society Peter Kropotkin observes: "Within the tribe



# nitive to Communism

certainly, means that the women, ie the mothers, are held in high respect. One of the most absurd notions taken over from Eighteenth-century enlightenment is that in the beginning of society woman was the slave of man. Among all savages and all barbarians of the lower and middle stages, and to a certain extent of the upper stage also, the position of women is not only free, but honourable". (*Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*). And Lafargue observes that "Landed property, which was ultimately to constitute for its owner a means of emancipation and of social supremacy was, at its origin, a cause of subjection; the women were condemned to rude labour in the fields, from which they were emancipated only by the introduction of servile labour. Agriculture, which led to private property in land, introduced the servile labour which in the course of centuries has borne the names of slave-labour, bond-labour and wage-labour".

In sum, writes Engels, "At all earlier stages of society production was essentially collective, just as consumption proceeded by direct distribution of the products within larger or smaller communistic communities. This collective production was very limited; but inherent in it was the producers' control over their process of production and their product. They knew what became of their product: they consumed it; it did not leave their hands. And so long as production remains on this basis, it cannot grow above the heads of the producers, nor raise up incorporeal alien powers against them, as in civilisation is always the case."

Thus, in brief, was what has been called Primitive Communism.

## UTOPIAN COMMUNISM

It is, in this short essay, impossible to chronicle all, or even most, of the utopian movements and revolts which included communistic elements and tendencies. Suffice it that we mention one or two. Utopian or backward-looking communist currents can be traced as far back as the great slave revolt of 71 BC. Spartacus is reported as saying: "Whatever we take, we hold in common, and no man shall own anything but his weapons and his clothes. It will be the way it was in the old times". (*Spartacus*, by Howard Fast).

Class hatred and an utopian form of communism was practiced by many of the early Christians, most of whom were, in the early days of that religion, plebians or former slaves. The Acts of the Apostles confirmed that "...all had things in common". And in the eleventh homily (sermon) of the Acts, one reads: "Grace was among them, since nobody suffered want, that is since they gave willingly that no one remained poor. For they did not give a part, keeping part for themselves; they gave everything in their possession. They did away with inequality and lived in great abundance. What a man needed was taken from the treasure of the community not from the private property of individuals. Thereby the givers did not become arrogant...All gave all that they have into a common fund..." In his *Foundations of Christianity*, Karl Kautsky comments

that in the Gospel of St. John, the communistic life of Jesus and the apostles it taken for granted. Such communism, however, was mainly a communism of consumption. The Jewish Essenes also practiced a similar form of communism. Christian communism soon declined and disappeared. "Acceptance of slavery, along with increasing restriction of the community of property to common meals, were not the only limitations the Christian community encountered in its efforts to put its communistic tendencies into effect", writes Kautsky. Rich sympathisers joined the Church. Money became more important. Concessions were made; and rich men found that they could enter the Kingdom of Heaven—at a price! In sum, says Kautsky, "It was the Christian community, not Christian communism, to which the Roman emperors finally bowed. The victory of Christianity did not denote the dictatorship of the proletariat, but the dictatorship of the gentlemen who had grown big in their community. The champions and martyrs of the early communities, who had devoted their possessions, their labour, their lives for the salvation of the poor and miserable, had only laid the groundwork for a new kind of subjection and exploitation". Nevertheless, the ideas and ideals of communism did not completely die. Even within the Christian Church.

Communism is occasionally mentioned during what historians have called the Middle Ages. It is sometimes referred to as "agrarian communism"; but as Frank Ridley points out in his *The Revolutionary Tradition in England*, "The communism of the Middle Ages was essentially and necessarily a religious communism: it took the form of religious heresies in both East and West...it was one of the major forces making for social revolution throughout the entire mediaeval era. Its untiring propagandists were the underground religious heresies, from that little-known subterranean world which was always smouldering beneath the surface of mediaeval society." This communism was, of course, from the nature of the times, an agrarian communism of consumption, and not an industrial communism of production as in modern times. It was also a religious, and as such, a backward-looking communism. What else could it have been? For that matter, all communism and every revolution that had communism for its aim prior to the Industrial Revolution, looked to the past for its models. Of particular interest, however, is the communism of John Ball and the peasants who took part in the great revolt of 1381.

This is not the place to go into the causes of the revolt. They include the Hundred Years War, the shortage of peasant labour due to the Black Death, the terrible miseries of many of the peasants and the religious-agrarian communist propaganda of the Lollards.

Prior to the great revolt, a hedge-priest, whose "base" was in Colchester, by the name of John Ball, roamed the countryside, speaking to people wherever they gathered. Ball was probably the world's first communist "agitator". His text was a little jingle: "When Adam delved and Eve span, Who was then the gentleman?". After his release from Rochester prison, Ball spoke to an enormous audience of peasants on Blackheath, on June 12th 1381. His exact speech is not known, but Charles Poulson in his *English Episode*, and William Morris in his *A Dream of John Ball*, both give us a very good idea of what he probably said.

Says Poulson's John Ball: "...In the beginning all men were equal, all men were brothers. How is it that some can say 'I am nobler than you'? How is it that one man delves day-long in the earth, and with all his labour has not enough to feed his babes, and another takes the life from the poor and makes from it a jewelled mantle for his back?...I say to you that in spite of its fine pride and rich clothing, its white hands and perfumes, Nobility is evil...And in truth it is time to cry enough. I see you here before me, my brothers, and not one of you but

has lived his life toiling, from the first sun-up till the last rays fade. And you are clothed in rags. The corn and the cattle grow great in your care, but there is little fat on you. A handful of beans is your pottage. All that you grow, all that you make and build, is taken. This in fines, this in dues, this in labour. The noble master drains your blood like a vampire. Would there not be plenty and happiness but for what is taken? So I say, my brothers, let us feed our children before their lordships. Let us make an end to this thieving."

And, according to William Morris, John Ball spoke thus:

"...too many rich men there are in this realm; and yet if there were but one, there would be one too many, for all should be his thralls...And how shall it be when these (masters) are gone, what else shall ye lack when ye lack masters? Ye shall not lack for fields ye have tilled, nor the houses ye have built, nor the cloth ye have woven; all these shall be yours, and whatso ye will of all that the earth beareth; and he that soweth shall reap, and the reaper shall eat in fellowship... then shall no man mow the deep grass for another..."

On other occasions, John Ball remarked that "things cannot go well in England, nor ever will, until everything shall be in common". (See *A People's History of England*, by A.L.Morton. Similar views were expressed elsewhere in Europe, particularly among the French Jacquerie about forty years before. In England they became largely dormant for centuries. It is to the "Great Rebellion"—the English Revolution—of the seventeenth century that we must look next for communistic ideas and experiments.

Utopian communist ideas found champions among the Levellers; but, as yet, communism made no appeal among the people of the towns and cities, which did not possess an industrial proletariat. In his *Cromwell and Communism*, Eduard Bernstein remarks: "At the most, communistic proposals might have attracted the rural workers at certain times. In fact, there is no instance during the Great Rebellion of an independent class movement of the town workers, although during the zenith of the movement there were several attempts at agrarian communist risings".

An associate of John Liburne, by the name of William Walwyn, attacked "the inequality of the distribution of the things of this life"; and claimed, like John Ball before him, that "the world shall never be well until all things be common". And against objections to communism, he commented: "There would then be less need for Government; for then there would be no thieves, no covetous persons, no deceiving and abuse of one another, and so no need of Government." William Walwyn would appear to have been Britain's first anarchist-communist! There were others who advocated somewhat similar ideas, often with quotations from the Bible.

And there were also others who attempted to put their ideas into practice. Among them were the "True Levellers", as they called themselves; or "diggers", as their contemporaries dubbed them.

On Sunday, April 8th, 1649, there suddenly appeared near Cobham in Surrey, a group of men, armed with spades, who started to dig up uncultivated land at the side of St. George's Hill. Their intention was to grow corn and other produce on it. They explained to the local country-folk that their numbers were, as yet, few but would soon increase to 4,000. They proposed that "the common people ought to dig, plow, plant, and dwell upon the Commons without hiring them, or paying any rent". After they had erected tents, worked the land and

prepared to dig on a second hill, also for sowing, (their numbers had increased to about fifty), they were attacked by troops and many were arrested. Winstanley, their leader, was brought before General Fairfax. None of the "diggers" were prepared to defend themselves by force, however. Most were heavily fined. Later, they attempted again to take over common lands, but were again arrested—and fined. They also published pamphlets, some of which were "couched in somewhat mystical phraseology, which", says Bernstein, "serves as a cloak to conceal the revolutionary designs of the authors". One such pamphlet argued that "In the beginning of time the Creator Reason made the earth to be common treasury." They also composed a 'Digger's Song' in a similar vein.

In 1651, Gerrard Winstanley wrote his *The Law of Freedom on a platform*—in which he said:

"Is not buying and selling a righteous law? No, it is the law of the conqueror, but not righteous law of creation: how can that be righteous which is a cheat?...When mankind began to buy and sell, then did he fall from his innocence; for then he began to oppress and cozen one another of their creation birthright."

He continues that, though Crown and Church lands should be for common use, they were being sold to land-grabbing army officers and speculators of all kinds. He says that there should be neither poor nor rich; that there should be no inequality; that the "earth and storehouses be common"; that there should be no buying or selling, and, lastly, no need for any lawyers. Winstanley was not, however, opposed to organisation. "All officers in a true Magistracy of the Commonwealth are to be chosen officers. All officers in a Commonwealth are to be chosen new ones every year." "When publique officers remain long", he contended, "they degenerate". Indeed, the "True Levellers" had quite a platform of "articles" and "clauses"! Utopians, the Levellers and True Levellers may have been, but at least their ideas and organisation was, indeed, more advanced and practical than some of our own "modern" anarchists! Moreover, far from all the utopian communists of the period were pacifists. Within the Cromwellian army, there were a number of rebellions from 1647 onwards. Unfortunately, the movements of the period seem to have evolved or degenerated into Quakerism, and relative respectability.

#### MARXISM

The society of the early savage was Primitive Communism. But a few thousand years ago, with the cultivation of the soil and the subsequent production of a surplus, class divisions became apparent. Warfare became organised; a repressive State emerged and prisoners were taken captive. They were, more often than not, made to toil in the fields or build temples and pyramids for their new masters. Hence the slave empires of antiquity. Wealth tended to accumulate in the hands of a few wealthy people. The fall of the last of the slave empires—that of the decadent Roman Empire—marked the dawn of a new era. About a thousand years ago, in what we call Europe and elsewhere, a new form of private property society, and a new form of slavery for the many, gradually emerged. It has been called feudalism. The slave became the serf. His master owned the land; and the serf toiled on his lord's land, producing wealth for him, and in return he was allowed to work upon tiny strips of land for himself. The wealth he, thus, produced was generally just enough for him to live on. "It had taken several thousands of years of chattel slavery to prepare the way for serfdom. And it took several centuries of feudalism to prepare the way for a new form of society—capitalism—the kernel of which already existed in the feudal society." (*Socialist Manifesto*, S.P. of C.).



The wealth and power of the townsmen, or at least a section of them, increased and that of the landowning nobility declined. The nobleman became a complete parasite upon society. Society's new masters—after many struggles and setbacks, as well as revolutions—became the burghers or, as they were later called, the bourgeoisie. Trade and commerce increased. "Once freed from the fetters of feudalism, the onward march of capitalism became a mad, headlong rush. Everywhere mills, factories, and furnaces sprang up. Their smoke and fumes turned fields once fertile and populous into desolate, uninhabitable wastes; their refuse poisoned and polluted the rivers until they stank to Heaven..." (*Socialist Manifesto*).

A new condition of slavery replaced serfdom. Socialists, both Marxist and non-Marxist, called, and still call, it "wage-slavery". Former serfs and, quite often, free peasants, were driven from the land and herded into the towns, where they were forced (otherwise they would have starved—and often did!) to work in the mills and mines, and the factories, of their new masters, the bourgeoisie, the owners of capital—the capitalists. The workers created, as did the slaves and serfs, a surplus for their masters, over and above what was needed to keep them more or less in working order. Capitalism, as a society, is based upon wage-labour and capital.

With the development of capitalism, economists and others, including social reformers and utopian socialist "intellectuals" began to analyse the new and developing society. A new body of ideas began to emerge as to the nature of capitalism. In the main, from about 1844 onwards, they have been associated with two Germans, who, for many years lived in England, the then most advanced capitalist country. They were Karl Marx and Frederick Engels—though both admitted their debt to earlier economists and philosophers. Nevertheless, both Marx and Engels were particularly scathing in their attacks on what they considered to be "unscientific" socialists and communists as well as those whom called themselves "True Socialists". However, in 1845, Engels was still influenced by utopian communist ideas. In the penultimate paragraph of his *The Condition of the Working-Class in England in 1844* he asserts that "communism stands, in principle, above the breach between bourgeoisie and proletariat...Communism is a question of humanity and not of the workers alone...And as Communism stands above the strife between bourgeoisie and proletariat it will be easier for the better elements of the bourgeoisie...to unite with it..." But by 1847, when he drafted *Principles of Communism* (that is the first draft of the famous *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels), Engels begins by saying that "Communism is the doctrine of the conditions of liberation of the proletariat". Incidentally, Engels in his *Principles of Communism* says that the workers are propertyless and are obliged to sell their labour to the bourgeoisie; later, after Marx had studied the capitalist mode of production, he asserted that the workers did not sell their labour, but their labour-power, their abilities to work.

In 1845, Marx wrote his *German Ideology*, in which he deals with and attacks the idealistic thinkers of Germany and, in the second part of the book, such "True" socialists and utopian communists as Saint-Simon, Fourier and Proudhon. He also attacks Proudhon in his *Poverty of Philosophy*. However, the first great "classic" of "scientific" or what, later on, has been called authoritarian, communism was, of course, the *Communist Manifesto*. In the main, it has remained so; though Engels writes in his 1872 Preface that parts of the program had "in some details become antiquated".

The *Communist Manifesto* begins by asserting that "A spectre

is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism". The history of all hitherto existing (recorded) society, it proclaims, is the history of class struggles. But our society—capitalism—has simplified class antagonisms. "All society is more or less splitting up into two opposing camps, into two great hostile classes: the bourgeoisie and the proletariat", says the *Manifesto*. (I quote from the SLP, that is the De Leonist version, though I have four or five different versions and translations, all more or less the same). Marx and Engels, in the *Communist Manifesto* (which saw the light of day in 1848) openly break with the utopians and the "True" socialists in advocating that it will be the proletarians—albeit through a Communist Party—who must overthrow bourgeois society. Says the *Manifesto*: "All previous historical movements were the movements of minorities, or in the interests of minorities. The proletarian movement is the conscious movement of the immense majority in the interest of the immense majority". This is, indeed, worth remembering as many so-called latter-day Marxists and all Leninists plug the "vanguard party" line. Marx and Engels emphasise that the workers have no country. They are, to all intents and purposes, propertyless. It is worth noting that, in 1848, and more or less throughout their lives, Marx and Engels combine their propaganda for communism with a list of reforms. Like many others, they felt that one could advocate both the abolition of bourgeois society and reforms of that society at one and the same time! The *Manifesto*, therefore, calls for, among other things, a heavy progressive income tax, abolition of inheritance, confiscation of the property of emigrants and rebels, centralisation of credit in the hands of the State, centralisation of the means of transportation in the hands of the State, organisation of industrial armies and free public education. In other words: state-capitalism!

Their vision of communism of the future, is summed up thus:

"When in the course of development class distinctions have disappeared, and all production is concentrated in the hands of associated individuals, the public power will lose its political character. Political power, properly speaking, is the organised power of one class for the purpose of oppressing another. If the proletariat, forced in its struggle against the bourgeoisie to organise as a class, makes itself by a revolution the ruling class, and as the ruling class destroys by force the old conditions of production. It destroys along with these conditions of production the conditions of existence of class antagonism, classes in general, and, therewith, its own domination as a class.

In the place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, an association appears in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all".

The *Communist Manifesto* ends with the now famous: "Workers of all Lands, Unite!"

In his paper addressed to the General Council of the First International (later published as *Value, Price and Profit* and not *Wages, Price and Profit*, as has been stated on occasions, particularly in Russia), Marx calls on the working class to abolish the wages system, though as an ultimate, not immediate, aim. This was in 1865. Ten years later, in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, Marx elaborates on what he considers a communist society would be like. Like the *Communist Manifesto*, the *Critique of the Gotha Program*, is readily available, and should be read by anarchists and libertarian communists. I will, therefore, only quote the main points from the third section. (I use the Workers' Literature Bureau version, published in Melbourne, Australia, in 1946. The other



editions are much the same, whether they be the Russian, De Leonist or Lawrence and Wishart editions). Says Marx:

"Within the co-operative society, based on the common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products...What we are dealing with here is a Communist society, not as it has developed on its own basis, but, on the contrary, as it is just issuing out of capitalist society. Hence a society that still retains, in every respect, economic, moral and intellectual, the birthmarks of the old society from whose womb it is issuing'. Here, Marx argues that the producer gets back exactly as much as he gives; he receives a community cheque showing that he has done so much labour. "Equal right is here, therefore, still according to the principle, capitalist right...". It is still tainted with "a capitalist limitation". It is, therefore, says Marx, "a right of inequality". Nevertheless he argues, "these shortcomings are unavoidable in the first phase of Communist society". But—and here we come to the all-important and well-known passage of the *Critique of the Gotha Program*—"In the higher phase of Communist society, after the enslaving subordination of the individual under the division of labour has disappeared, and therewith also the opposition between manual and intellectual labour; after labour has become not only a means of life, but also the highest want of life; when the development of all the faculties of the individual, the productive forces have correspondingly increased, and all the springs of social wealth flow more abundantly—only then may the limited horizon of capitalist right be left behind entirely, and society inscribe on its banners 'From everyone according to his faculties, to everyone according to his needs!'".

In Section Two of the *Critique*, Marx asks the question: "What then is the change which the institution of the State will undergo in a communist society?" And his answer is: "Between the capitalist and communist systems of society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the one into the other. This corresponds to a political transition period, whose State can be nothing else but the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat". Nowhere in this stage in Marx's thinking does he seem to envisage any sort of dying out or 'withering away' of the State. For such ideas, we have to look—at a somewhat later date—to Engels.

Engels' most important works on the subject of communism/socialism are his *Anti-Dühring*, first published in 1878, and his *Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, first published in 1884. Part of *Anti-Dühring* has appeared as *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, a work much admired by groups such as the SPGB in this country. In Part Three of *Anti-Dühring*, Engels first discusses Robert Owen's communist theories and colonies as well as the ideas of Saint-Simon and Fourier. Such people, Engels dubs as utopians; but remarks that "The utopians...were utopians because they could be nothing else at a time when capitalist production was as yet so little developed". After analysing bourgeois society in the same, but somewhat clearer, manner as did Marx, Engels then outlines what has remained the 'classic' Marxist method of bringing socialism about.

"The proletariat seizes the State power, and transforms the means of production in the first instant into State property. But in doing this, it puts an end to itself as the proletariat; it puts an end to all class differences and class antagonisms; it puts an end to the State as the State." And "When ultimately it (the State) becomes really representative of society as a whole, it makes itself superfluous. As soon as there is no longer any class of society to be held in subjection; as soon as

—along with class domination and the struggle for individual existence based on the former anarchy (sic!) of production, the collisions and excesses arising from these have also been abolished—there is nothing more to be repressed that would take a special repressive force, a State necessary. The first act in which the State really comes forward as the representative of society as a whole—the taking possession of the means of production in the name of society—is at the same time its last independent act as a State...The government of persons is replaced by the administration of things and the direction of the processes of production. The State is not 'abolished', it withers away." In the *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* version it says: "It dies out". In his section on production, Engels argues that production must be revolutionised from "top to bottom"; productive labour will become a pleasure, not a burden; production, utilising modern industry, will be on the basis of "one single vast plan"; and there will also be the abolition of the separation between town and country, as well as the old division of labour.

In his *Origin of the State*, Engels argues that the proletariat must constitute its own Party and vote for its own representatives to Parliament. "Universal suffrage", he says, "is thus the gauge of the maturity of the working class. It cannot and never will be anything more; but that is enough". Of the State, he contends that it has not existed from all eternity. Societies have managed without it. The State will inevitably fall. In fact, he says, "The society which organises production anew on the basis of free and equal association of the producers will put the whole State machinery where it will then belong—into the museum of antiquities, next to the spinning wheel and the bronze axe".

Before leaving the Marxian view of communism/socialism, I think it is worth mentioning that Marx and Engels envisioned a quite authoritarian state of affairs within such a society, at least in the early days. In his essay on *Authority*, Engels writes:

"Authority . . . means the imposition of the will of another upon ours; on the other hand, authority presupposes subordination. Now, since these two words sound bad and the relationship which they represent is disagreeable to the subordinated party, the question is to ascertain whether there is any way of dispensing with it, whether—given the conditions of present-day society—we could not create another social system, in which this authority would be given no scope any longer and would consequently have to disappear. . . .

. . . Everywhere combined action . . . displaces independent action by individuals; now, is it possible to have organisation without authority?

Supposing a social revolution dethroned the capitalists, who now exercises authority over the production and circulation of wealth. Supposing, to adopt entirely the view of the anti-authoritarians, that the land and the instruments of labour had become the collective property of the workers who use them. Will authority have disappeared, or will it only have changed its form?"

Engels then instances a factory, a large cotton mill. He says:

" . . . particular questions arise in each room and at every moment concerning the mode of distribution, production of materials, etc., which must be settled at once at pain of seeing production immediately stopped; whether they are settled by decision of a delegate placed at the head of branch of labour or, if possible, by a majority vote, the will of the single individual will always be subordinate itself, which means that

questions are settled in an authoritarian manner".

Engels' conclusions regarding the "delegation of function" are, of course, open to debate; but in fact, he goes much further in his praise of authority. He continues:

"But the necessity of authority, and of impervious authority at that, will nowhere be found more evident than on board a ship on the high seas. There, in time of danger, the lives of all depend on the instantaneous and absolute obedience of all to the will of one".

Engels was, of course, wrong then, as he would be now! I have, in fact, dealt with this in an article entitled *Anarchy in the Navy*, in *Anarchy 14*, instancing the running of much of the Spanish Republican Fleet by rank-and-file sailors during the revolutionary period in 1936.

We will leave Engels to his "impervious authority"; though it may not come amiss to mention here that, surprisingly, even William Morris, who has always been considered something of a libertarian socialist and a quasi-anarchist, also takes a similar line to Engels regarding the running of a ship "in socialist condition", in his essay, *Communism*.

Lastly, I shall briefly turn to the libertarian or anarchist-communist viewpoints, which in the last century were mainly associated with two Russians—Michael Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin, though others also espoused similar views.

#### LIBERTARIAN COMMUNISM

Between 1842 and 1861, Bakunin could best be described as a revolutionary pan-Slavist, though there are indications of libertarian tendencies before 1861. I would say, however, that he could not really be called a libertarian or anarchist before 1866, when he wrote his *Revolutionary Catechism*.

In his *Catechism*, Bakunin argues that "freedom is the absolute right of every adult man and woman" that "the freedom of each is therefore realizable only in the equality of all". He asserts the absolute rejection of every authority, "including that which sacrifices freedom for the convenience of the State". "order in society" he says, "must result from the greatest possible realization of individual liberty, as well as of liberty on all levels of social organisation". He calls for the "establishment of a commonwealth", and the "abolition of classes, ranks and privileges" and, rather surprising, "universal suffrage", though Max Nettlau says that he did not mean in the State, but in the new society. Bakunin also calls for the abolition of the "all-pervasive, regimented, centralised State", and the "internal reorganisation of each country on the basis of the absolute freedom of individuals, of the productive associations and of the communes". Freedom can only be defended by freedom, he says. "The basic unit of all political organisation in each country must be the completely autonomous commune constituted by the majority vote of all adults of both sexes. No one shall have either the power or the right to interfere in the internal life of the commune..." The nation, continues Bakunin, must be nothing but a federation of autonomous provinces. Without political equality there can be no real political liberty, but political equality will be possible only when there is social and economic equality. The majority, says Bakunin, live in slavery. And "This slavery will last until capitalism is overturned by the collective action of the workers". Therefore the land, and all the natural resources, are (to be) the common property of everyone..." He concludes his *Catechism*: "The revolution, in short, has this aim: freedom for all, for

individuals as well as collective bodies, associations, communes, provinces, regions, and nations, and the mutual guarantee of this freedom by federation".

Later, also in 1866, Bakunin wrote another *Catechism* on very much the same lines, in which he again asserts that the land is to be the common property of all; and that "The revolution must be made not for, but by, the people, and can never succeed if it does not enthusiastically involve all the masses of the people; that is, in the rural countryside as well as the cities."

In his *Federalism, Socialism, Anti-Theologism*, Bakunin says that socialism means "to organise society in such a manner that every individual endowed with life, man or woman, may find almost equal means for the development of his various faculties . . . to organise a society which, while it makes it impossible for any individual whatsoever to exploit the labour of others, will not allow anyone to share in the enjoyment of social wealth, always produced by labour only, unless he has himself contributed to its creation with his own labour". He thinks that the complete solution — to the problems thrown up by capitalism — "will no doubt be the work of centuries". Nevertheless, "history has set the problem before us, and we can no longer evade it if we are not to resign ourselves to total impotence".

Bakunin, again and again, asserts that the people must make the revolution themselves, that the State must go first; that society must be "organised from the bottom up by revolutionary delegations . . ."; that the "revolutionary alliance" of the people must exclude any form of dictatorship. But, at least in 1869, Bakunin argued that a well-organised revolutionary "society" can assist "at the birth of the revolution by spreading among the masses ideas which give expression to their instincts, and to organise, not any army of the revolution — the people alone should always be that army — but a sort of revolutionary general staff, composed of dedicated, energetic, intelligent individuals, sincere friends of the people above all . . . capable of serving as intermediaries between the revolutionary idea and the instincts of the people". There need not, says Bakunin, be a great number of such people. Two or three hundred, he suggests, for the organisation in the largest countries. What our British "traditional" anarchists — who it would seem are not traditionalists, or at least Bakuninists — would say to this idea I fear to think!

Bakunin was particularly critical of those whom he called the "State Communists". He was also scathing of those whom he considered wished to impose communism or, as he sometimes called it, collectivism, on the peasants. These he considered to be Jacobins, Bakunin and Marx were, of course, antagonists. This was partly personal and partly political. In his *Letter to La Liberté*, Bakunin attacks Marx, saying that the popes had, at least, an excuse for considering that they possessed "absolute truth"; but "Mr. Marx has no such excuse". In Bakunin's view, "the policy of the proletariat, necessarily revolutionary, should have the destruction of the State for its immediate goal". But Bakunin could not understand how Marx and the Marxists wished to preserve, or use the State, as an instrument of emancipation. "State means domination, and any domination presupposes the subjection of the masses and, consequently, their exploitation for the benefit of some ruling minority", asserts Bakunin against Marx. "The Marxists profess quite contrary ideas," argues Bakunin. "Between the Marxists and ourselves there is an abyss. They are the governmentalists; we are the anarchists in spite of it all", he says.

Basically, then, this was the great argument between Bakunin



and Marx; it is still the argument between revolutionary anarchists and Marxists; between authoritarian communists and libertarian communists.

(Note: All quotations from Bakunin are taken from *Bakunin on Anarchy*, edited by Sam Dolgoff. Much the same material can also be gleaned from *Bakunin*, edited by Maximoff.)

Of Bakunin, Peter Kropotkin writes: "Bakunin was at heart a Communist; but, in common with his Federalist comrades of the International, and as a concession to the antagonism that the authoritarian Communists had inspired in France, he described himself as a 'collectivist anarchist'. But, of course he was not a 'collectivist' in the sense of Vidal or Pecqueur, or their modern followers, who simply aim at State Capitalism." (*Modern Science and Anarchism*). Nevertheless, as early as 1869, a number of "Bakuninists" described themselves as Communists.

Kropotkin, to a large degree, developed the ideas put forward, often in a rather unscientific, uncoordinated, form, by Bakunin. Before becoming an anarchist, Kropotkin had had a scientific training and background. In his *Memoirs of a Revolutionist*, he sees, as it were, a new form of society germinating within "the civilized nations"; a society that must, one day, take the place of the old one: a society of equals, "who will not be compelled to sell their hands and brains to those who choose to employ them in a haphazard way, who will be able to apply their knowledge and capacities to production, in an organism so constructed as to combine all the efforts for procuring the greatest sum possible of well-being for all, while free scope will be left for every individual initiative". Kropotkin says that such a society will be composed of a multitude of associations, federated for the purposes which require federation — communes of production, communes of, and for, consumption, all kinds of organisations, covering not just one country but many. All of these will combine directly, be means of free agreements between them. "There will be", he says, "full freedom for the development of new forms of production,

invention and organisation". People will combine for all sorts of work "in common". The tendency towards uniformity and centralization will be discouraged, remarks Kropotkin. Private ownership and the wages system must go. There will be no need of government, because of the free federation and "free agreement" of organisations, which will take its place. And in his *Modern Science and Anarchism*, Kropotkin particularly attacks the "State Socialists", who under the name of collectivism (we should say nationalisation today), advocated, not communism or socialism, but State Capitalism. This, he says, is nothing new; perhaps just an improved, but still undesirable, form of the wage-system.

Kropotkin, in the same work, refers to "the coming social revolution", which is quite different from that of a Jacobin dictatorship. And of such a revolution, he remarks: "During a revolution new forms of life will always germinate on the ruin of the old forms, but no government will ever be able to find their expression so long as these forms will not have taken a definite shape during the work of reconstruction itself, which must be going on in a thousand spots at the same time." Such was Kropotkin's federalist — libertarian — communism and socialism.

Since Bakunin and Kropotkin formulated their ideas of free, federalist, anarchist, libertarian, communism, others have followed and developed them. Malatesta popularised them; and so did Alexander Berkman, particularly in *What Is Communist Anarchism*. In 1926, Archinov, Makhno, Ida Mett and others developed the ideas of libertarian, anarchist, communism and organisation in their *Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists*. I will not discuss the views of Malatesta, Berkman and the "Platformists" here as, no doubt, many of you are as, if not more, familiar with them as I am. Naturally, the formulation of libertarian communist and socialist ideas, and forms of organisation, will continue, in the words of Kropotkin, "to germinate". Let us hope so!

PETER E NEWELL

February, 1976.

## Reviews

**A CONTRIBUTION TO THE CRITIQUE OF MARX** by John Crump (published jointly by Social Revolution/London, c/o 83 Gregory Crescent, London SE9, and Solidarity/London, c/o 123 Latham Road, London E6.) 10p

The aim of this pamphlet is to trace a connecting line of thought from Marx and Engels to Leninist state capitalism. In this, John Crump succeeds. At least in so far as success is to find quotations and examples from Marx and Engels' writings paralleled in Lenin. So here we have a stick with which to beat the non-Leninist Marxists. (For Marxist-Leninists the argument that Lenin follows Marx is of course already accepted, but with a different interpretation.)

But herein lies my first criticism. The pamphlet is very much in the trend of Marxist exegesis: the "what-Marx-really-said/meant" school. My usual response is

'so what?'. The question applies to this pamphlet and I don't think it is answered adequately.

The minor these is more interesting though, unfortunately, not developed in terms of its relevance to us today. John Crump argues that, unlike Lenin, Marx *did* have a view of communism which was not state capitalist. So how come much of Marx's writings lend weight to the state capitalist school? This anomaly is attributed to the fact that Marx was an 'activist' eager to 'get involved'. As he lived for the most part through a non-revolutionary situation, he was obliged to water down his communism to make his ideas more relevant to the actual on-going (capitalist) struggles of the day. The alternative was to remain 'pure' in theory, but impotent in the sense of shying away from day-to-day practice (à la SPBG, a party which, until recently counted the author of this pamphlet among its members). John Crump asserts that the dilemma is still with us today and will not be resolved until the working class gets on the move and develops a communist consciousness.

Here I begin to part company over the view of communist consciousness (not explained—when is it ever?—but implicit throughout). Many times in this short pamphlet there are references to the 'correct' theory of communism, and Marx is criticised for deviating from this. But what is this 'correct theory'? Or, to bring out my point more clearly, whose 'correct theory'? To me, there is something false about a dilemma which counterposes on the one hand theoretical purity and on the other the theoretically murky areas of activity. It is no use us bemoaning the fact that Marx, Lenin, the working class, or whoever are deviating from 'the correct theory'. The task of revolutionaries (whatever that means!) is to observe and learn from what is already going on in society, what is already revolutionary, and to participate with others in those activities in which we find value. (I know this is begging lots of questions, but for the time being, as they say in Yorkshire—'nuf said!)

Bob Dent



# Who is the enemy?

THE SUPERPOWERS, THE THREAT OF WAR, AND THE BRITISH WORKING CLASS Second World Defence pamphlet No 1 20p.

Humanity, it is said, lives not by reason but by the myths it creates. And in the mythology of the traditional left the big bogeyman has always been the USA. Now, as the traditional left begins to disintegrate, new myths are created to replace those grown old and discredited. Thus the authors of the pamphlet under review, echoing Solzhenitsyn, claim that the main threat to Western Europe and its working people is from the USSR, a power defined as State Capitalist, imperialist, aggressive and expansionist.

Libertarians would not disagree with this analysis, that is why when others have prattled on about the 'Workers' Bomb', and about defending the Workers' States and the gains of the October Revolution we have taken to the streets in support of freedom in Czechoslovakia. That is why we have sought to expose the activities of the KGB which uses "Russian Empire Loyalists" in the CP and in outfits like the Appeal Group to spy on so-called anti-soviet activity.

That there is a threat from the East as well as from the West cannot be denied, for recent events in Angola, where the super-powers sought to assert their hegemony at the expense of the local working class people, have all too vividly reminded us of it. The big question, however, is what to do about it. Having rejected revolutionary defeatism (the concept that the working class can use the opportunities afforded by the crises resulting from inter-capitalist conflicts for its own independent, revolutionary ends) Second World Defence falls into the old trap of imagining that the enemies of our enemies are our friends. Thus they advocate an alliance between the workers and the capitalists of what they call the Second World, "those small and medium sized developed capitalist countries that are not imperialist great powers". Among other things, such an alliance would involve support for NATO (which is aimed not at the 'enemy without', the USSR, but the enemy within, the European working class) and the reintroduction of conscription with its extension to women.

A similar position is held by the Belgian Maoist group Top/Amade (see the article, "The Belgian Maoists and the passion for national defence" in *Le Proletaire* 21 Feb-5 March 1976). In a flamboyant declaration their National Bureau states: "The Belgian people and all the peoples of Europe have an urgent task: reinforcement of their national defence and preparation to defend, arms in hand, their national freedom." It is not so long since one British Maoist sect was advocating an alliance between the "progressive" capitalists (including Enoch Powell!) and the workers against the USA.

The fruits of such a policy of abandoning independent conscious working class activity in favour of an alliance with this or that group of capitalists can be seen in 1914 when the leaders of the Social Democratic parties of the Second International dropped any pretence to being internationalist and anti war and rushed to support on the one hand the Fatherland against Tsarist absolutism and on the other democracy against Prussian militarism, encouraging workers to march off to be slaughtered in their millions so that the profits of the arms barons might grow.

More recently we have seen all the super powers come to the aid of the government of Ceylon (which is supported both by pro Moscow Communists and the Trotskyists of the LSSP) against the 1971 uprising.

Since the war-time conferences at Yalta and Teheran which divided the Earth into spheres of influence, capitalism has been an integrated world system. As Second World Defence points out the USSR, having rebuilt its war ravaged industries by looting its East European satellites and using the slave labour of the prisoners in the camps, is now an exporter of finance and industrial capital—half of Egypt's foreign debt is to the USSR.

As recent Soviet purchases of US wheat (which led to a protest strike by American dockers) show not only that the USSR has failed to sort out the agricultural chaos created by the forced collectivisation of the first five year plan but also that it is willing and able to play the game of commodity speculation.

Meanwhile, Western capital seeks new markets in the East, Fiat builds car factories in Togliattigrad while West German, American and Japanese finance and technology help the Soviet Government to exploit the natural resources of Siberia. The West German Thyssen, Mannesmann Company, for example, agreed to provide the USSR with large diameter gas pipe on credit of 1.2 billion DM.

Over the last five years Poland has imported several billion dollars worth of machinery, everything from complete chemical plants to soft drink machines. The Polish Government is now trying to repay its massive foreign debt by imposing a severe programme of austerity on the working class.

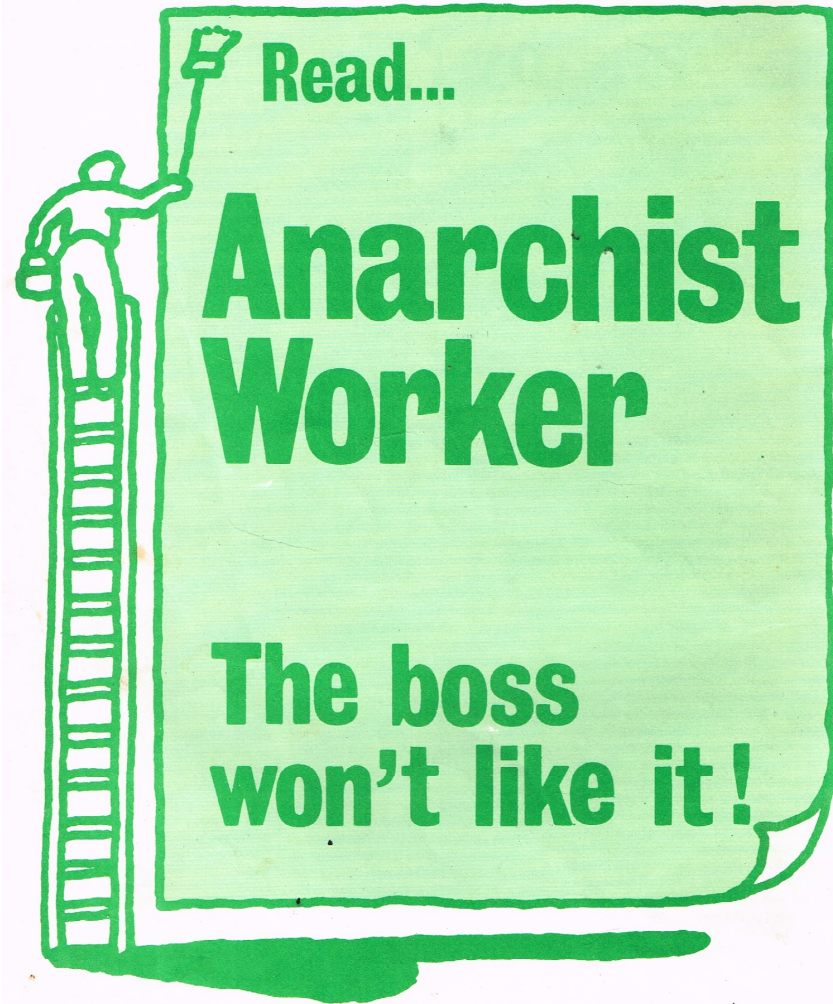
Second World Defence claims there is a grave danger of war. Such a war they see being triggered by a Soviet invasion of Western Europe and fought along conventional military lines with the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons (such weapons are equal in explosive force to the atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima). Here they are wrong. The danger of war exists, but a war situation is more likely to develop from attempts by rival capitalist blocs attempting to plunder the third world of diminishing natural resources in an attempt to solve their economic crisis. Although such a war could begin as a conventional military conflict it could all too easily develop into an all-out nuclear conflagration.

In order not only to prevent war but also to go forward towards a libertarian communist society the working class must redouble its efforts in its struggle against capitalism. We must learn that the workers have no fatherland, that capitalism is a world system and can, therefore, only be overthrown on a world scale. In our struggle in the West our allies are not the capitalists, however democratic they appear to be, however much their interests may conflict with those of the rulers of the super powers. Our allies are the workers of the East, the workers of East Germany whose uprising in 1963 shook the Stalinist monolith to its foundations, the workers of Hungary whose councils were crushed by Soviet tanks, the workers of Poland who revolted against price rises, the workers of Kiev who demonstrated with the slogan "All Power to the Soviets".

Second World Defence are right to quote Marx when he admonishes workers to masters the mysteries of international politics, but they themselves like many leftists have much to learn and much to forget.

Terry Liddle

(Terry Liddle is a member of Social Revolution (London))



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# LIBERTARIAN COMMUNIST REVIEW

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JOURNAL OF REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHISM

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- Building the Party?
- The Two Octobers.
- Wage Freeze.
- State Capitalism.
- Sectarianism.
- Reviews.



WINTER 1974

15p

**FOR WORKERS POWER**

# EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

British Anarchists, unlike those in other countries, have in recent years shown an almost total disregard for the development of a theoretical understanding of the world in which we live and the ways in which it has to be changed. In the 1960's we had the "Revisionist Anarchism" of Colin Ward and those grouped around the magazine *Anarchy*. What passed for 'theory' among this group was in fact a reformist recipe of liberalism and pacifism in approximately equal proportions. *Anarchy* almost totally ignored class struggle and had no recognition of the central role of the working class in changing society.

On the other hand we had the mindless activism of certain groups and individuals within the Anarchist Federation of Britain (now defunct). They implicitly accepted the revisionist notion that "the movement is everything... the goal is nothing." Many of them worked very hard in single issue campaigns - e.g. the peace movement, squatting, etc. These campaigns tended to be seen as an end in themselves, rather than as part of the struggle against capitalism. Inevitably when these struggles lost initial momentum the 'activists' either dropped out completely or turned their attention to the 'worthy cause where the whole wretched process could be repeated. Without a coherent theoretical basis to direct these activities, the effort expended was largely wasted and the real possibility of a revolutionary Anarchistic presence in the British working class was lost.

The organisation of Revolutionary Anarchists has no intention of repeating these mistakes. We base ourselves firmly on recognition of the class nature of capitalism and the fact that the working class is the only revolutionary class within capitalist society. But this in itself is hardly enough. It is necessary for Anarchists to develop from this basis a relevant theory of modern capitalism which analyses its strengths and weakness, so that the system can be fought more effectively. Such theory and its development through practice, must also be capable of defeating the authoritarian ideas of Leninism and Stalinism which presently dominate the British left. *Libertarian Communist Review* has an important part to play in the development of such a theory, and of the ORA.

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# Building the Revolutionary Party?

by Geoff Foote

Since the 1917 Russian Revolution, it has been generally accepted on the left that a revolutionary party, in the sense of a 'van-guard', is necessary for a successful revolution. Anarchist criticism has been shrugged off as coming from a numerically insignificant group of purists, who, unlike the Leninists, have never carried out a successful revolution. However, the denunciation of Stalin by Khrushchev, and the crushing of the Hungarian revolt in 1956 (among other things) has made it manifestly clear to all but the most blinkered that the revolution in Russia has been a failure. It might have been thought that Leninism would have been completely discredited, but myths about Stalin have been replaced by myths about Mao or Castro, or in the case of the Trotskyists the myth that the revolution could have been successful, if it had had the 'correct' leadership. Leninism, in its Stalinist or Trotskyist forms, remains the dominant ideology of the revolutionary left, partly because the emphasis on authority and leadership is more comprehensible to people raised in an authoritarian society than is the Anarchist rejection of authoritarianism. Anarchism has often gained ground *after* a revolution, when people resent attempts to re-impose authority on them. But though in the present situation in Britain, the Anarchists are numerically even more insignificant than the Trotskyists, our ideas remain important since they not only raise the question of the nature of post-revolutionary society, but also the related problem of how to launch a successful revolution. This is seen above all in the Anarchist rejection of the revolutionary party in its Leninist sense.

The main argument of this article is that the party is the reflection of the society it seeks to create. In looking at the major left groupings - social democratic, Stalinist, Leninist, Trotskyist - there is obviously a certain simplification. For instance, I ignore theories put forward by Gramsci and Luxembourg as well as groupings like the left of the Labour Party (a peculiar amalgam of Methodism, Social Democracy and Stalinism). A lack of space does not allow as complete a discussion of the problem as I would like, and certainly people like Gramsci should not be ignored. However, at this time it is necessary to concentrate on the main party groupings.

## 1. SOCIAL DEMOCRACY

In bourgeois democratic society the structure of these political parties which support the existing social order - conservative or reformist - are mirrors of a hierarchical authoritarian society. In the same way it can be said that those organisations which seek to transform society in the interests of the working class reflect within their structure the type of society they wish to create. The social democratic party, for example, derives its structure from its attitude towards bourgeois authority. Social democrats seek to create a socialist society on behalf of the working class, but fail to challenge the institutions of bourgeois democracy. Since social democrats accept the authority of the bourgeois state and law, they become agents of that authority. They make the mistake of assuming that the state stands above the class conflict, to be captured at elections by the representatives of the bourgeoisie or the proletariat. In fact the State is in the midst of the class struggle, operating as the armed wing of the ruling class. This can be seen not only in this country, but also in other European Social Democratic parties (eg. the French socialists under Mollat sent troops on an imperialist expedition to Suez in 1956 - and justified it in Marxist terms. The German social democrats have a long history of acting as instruments of bourgeois authority, from their suppression of the Spartakist revolt to their support for the West German emergency laws). The contradictions of social democracy - a result of its attitude to authority - resolve themselves into the position of undermining the revolutionary potential of the working class.

The social democratic vision of a new society - essentially the same as the old one in all respects but with the exception that the people are ruled with a beneficial paternalism which will end inequalities - is mirrored in its organisational structure. The leadership is a small bureaucracy running a mass party. The most important section of the leadership - the parliamentary party - is completely out of control of the mass organisation. Nominations for parliamentary candidature must be approved by the leadership. In Britain, the Labour Party group which draws up policies for the next election (the National Executive

Committee) is elected by non mandated conference delegates, and is thus out of control of the membership. When left wing policies are put forward they are ignored (eg. Gaitskell over CND, in 1960 and Wilson during and after government office). The mass membership of the party has all the abstract freedoms of bourgeois society - freedom of speech, freedom to hold radically different ideas etc., - so that Trotskyist 'entrists' groups like the Revolutionary Socialist League can co-exist with rightists like Woodrow Wyatt (and millionaire capitalists like Robert Maxwell) without upsetting the party. The parallels with bourgeois society are made complete by the fact that as soon as 'subversive' groups begin to pose a serious threat, as did the Communist Party in the 20's or the SLL in the 60's they are expelled en masse. Of course this does not mean that social democratic parties are any more free of mass pressures than are the ruling class. They need to win elections, and are often driven to absurd promises, like calling for a price freeze in a capitalist society caught in the throes of international inflation - a policy made more absurd and phoney by the fact that it is proposed by Wilson and Callaghan, instigators of the 1966 wage freeze. We can see from this that the institutionalised formal democracy of social democratic parties - a form without any substance - is a mirror of the social democrat's vision of socialism as a bourgeois society without the bourgeoisie.

## 2. THE STALINIST PARTIES

Unlike the social democrats the Stalinists (and I do not count the British CP as Stalinist but as left social democrat) seek to challenge bourgeois authority. However, they do not do so in the interests of democratic liberty, but in the interests of an opposing authority which claims to be more efficient than the bourgeoisie. Capitalist 'anarchy' will be replaced by bureaucratic planning which will end bourgeois exploitation and inequality of distribution. The Stalinist view of a socialist society - a bureaucratic State on the model of the USSR, with a monolithic ideology, where a small leadership dictates policy to the masses - is reflected in the structure of the Stalinist parties. Because of its historic origins in Leninism, the party is committed to democratic centralism, but real democracy is absent, because of the banning of factions, and the demand that the membership must submit completely to the policies worked out in the Central Committee.

The Stalinists' subjection to the need to defend Russia often leads to a situation where it can be revolutionary (eg. the big strike called by the Communists in France and Italy in 1947/48) or, more usually, counter-revolutionary (eg. Stalinist opposition to the Spanish revolution of 1936, their attitude to the May revolt in France in 1968). The contradictions of Stalinism attempting to change society are no less great than those of social democracy.

## 3. LENIN'S CONCEPT OF THE PARTY

Unlike social democracy and Stalinism, Leninism seeks to challenge bourgeois authority in the name of revolutionary freedom. Lenin in 'State and Revolution' called for a society where the State - defined as an instrument of class oppression - would eventually disappear. The paradox emerges when a Leninist government suppressed freedom and smashed the attempt of the Russian working class to free itself from rulers. This paradox is made clear only if we keep in mind that the revolutionary party is a reflection of the social order it seeks to create. It is significant that Chris Harman should write that: 'It is important to note that for Lenin the party is not the embryo of the workers' state.' (1), while at the same time attributing the

failure of the Russian revolution to the fact that it took place in a non-industrialised country racked by Civil War and international bourgeois intervention. While nobody can underestimate the tremendous consequences of such 'external' factors, it would be completely misleading to ignore 'internal' factors such as the Leninist theory of the Party and the relationship between the party and the working class.

Lenin's theory of the party is derived from his view of the nature of revolution and the role of revolutionaries. Revolution, Lenin correctly saw, is of necessity authoritarian. As Engels wrote: "A revolution is certainly the most authoritarian thing there is: it is an act whereby one part of the population imposes its will on the other by means of rifles, bayonets and cannon, all of which are highly authoritarian means." (2) (This does not mean of course that a revolution cannot be the most liberating thing there is). From this arises the idea that a transitional regime - the dictatorship of the proletariat - is needed to smash any attempt by the bourgeoisie to destroy the revolution. The role of the revolutionary party in this situation is the role of political leadership of the working class. "There could not have been social democratic consciousness among the workers. It would have to be brought to them from without...the working class exclusively by its own efforts is able to develop only trade union consciousness" (3). Lenin later modified this position to take account of the undeniable spontaneity of the class. ("The economists have gone to one extreme. To straighten matters out one had to pull in the other direction, and this is what I have done" (4). Lenin often pointed out that the proletariat was sometimes more revolutionary than the party. But the primary role of creating consciousness lies in the party: "The working class is instinctively, spontaneously social democratic, and more than ten years of work put in by social democracy has done a great deal to transform this spontaneity into consciousness." (5) Leadership is absolutely necessary for revolutionary success because of the fragmentation of consciousness and the organisation of the ruling class. But the nature of this leadership is more than mere persuasion and raising of consciousness. Such leadership is inevitable in any situation where many people are confused because they have never thought about the issues and listen to someone who has - who is in that sense a leader. An organization which seeks to link local struggles and explain a future course is, whether we like it or not, necessary. But the Leninist party is not only concerned with ideological leadership. It seeks political leadership of the State, since the proletariat, unlike a democratic centralist party, does not necessarily have the 'concrete view' even after revolution. Even in his most 'libertarian' text Lenin writes: "By educating the workers' party, Marxism educates the vanguard of the proletariat, capable of assuming power and leading the whole people to socialism" (6) Lenin later explains the reason for this vanguard of the proletariat: "We are not Utopians, we do not dream of disposing at once with all administration, with all subordination... No, we want the socialist revolution with subordination, control and foremen and accountants" (7). Any notion of self emancipation and self education is missing in Lenin. Realising the strength of the authoritarian culture he attacks and underestimates the speed with which many people overthrow authoritarian ideology in a revolutionary situation. He fails to see that "...if the proletariat itself does not know how to create the necessary prerequisites for the socialist organisation of labour, no one can do this for it and no one can compel it to do this. Socialism and socialist organisation will be set up by the proletariat itself, or they will not be set up at all. Something else will be set up - State capitalism" (8).



## 4. LENINIST SUBSTITUTIONISM.

Just as in the transitional regime of 'proletarian' dictatorship the hierarchy of authority and subordination remains, so in the party there is in the Central Committee and its policies. There is a hierarchy of authority. District and factory circles, local and territorial committees are elected and their decisions are then communicated from the top down. Opposition from the subordinates is quashed, or at best tolerated. In Russia the Left Communists were hounded out of existence in 1918. From the Democratic Centralists and the Workers' Opposition were frowned upon, and eventually, in 1921, after a party Congress which oppositionist claimed had rigged delegations, all factions were banned within the party (like most permanent bans, this was 'temporary'). The Cheka was then used against the oppositionists forced to illegally. Trotsky summed up Leninist ideas vividly in 1924 when he said: "...the Party in the last analysis is always right, because the Party is the single historical instrument given to the proletariat for the solution of its basic problems... I know that one must not be right against the party. One can be right only with the Party, and through the Party, for history has no other road for being in the right." (9) Ironically it was Trotsky himself who, in 1904 had pointed out the danger of such ideas. Before he became a Leninist he in a polemic against Leninist views of the Party: "The organisation of the party substitutes itself for the party as a whole, when the central committee itself for the organisation, and finally the dictator substitutes himself for the central committee." (10)

This substitutionism in the party was reflected in the society the Bolsheviks created. The rule of the party (or rather, its Central Committee) was substituted for the rule of the proletariat. The workers' committees running industry were castrated in 1917-1918 (before the civil war, the devastating effects of which are the constant excuse for Trotskyist and Stalinist apologists) in preparation for one man management. By the summer of 1918 elections to the Soviets had become a farce. In 1918 the Red Army, originally a democratic militia, was transformed by Trotsky into a non-democratic army on the bourgeois model, with saluting, different living quarters for officers, the death penalty for desertion etc.. In 1920 Trotsky (supported at first by Lenin) called for the militarisation of labour - labour armies to be used as scabs - and the substitution of Party-controlled production unions for genuine Trade Unions. The nature of the Party after 1914 (when it was broadened by many who agreed with Lenin only on the need to turn the imperialist war into a civil war) meant that these proposals came under fire from a significant minority (and in the case of the militarisation of labour proposals a majority). But as we have seen this opposition, and even the right to organise opposition, was effectively ended with the 1921 Party Congress.

Thus the original paradox, that Leninism, a doctrine calling for revolutionary freedom destroyed that freedom, can be seen not to be a paradox at all. Lenin's talk of proletarian democracy, and freedom from authority in 'State and Revolution' remained just that - talk. By removing such notions to a vague future, Lenin banished them to the realm of abstraction. What remained was the immediate task of overthrowing capitalism and establishing a transitional regime. Bourgeois authority was not challenged by the authority of a revolutionary proletariat (which alone would have laid the real preconditions for the abolition of authoritarianism) but by the authority of a political party - self-proclaimed 'vanguard of the proletariat'. Precisely because, as one prominent Left Communist proclaimed "socialism and socialist organisation will be set up by the proletariat itself, or they will not be set up at all", the 'transitional' regime of 1917/18 remains with us today, more powerful than ever.

## 5. THE TROTSKYIST ATTITUDE.

The Trotskyist never learned anything from failure of the Russian revolution. Trotsky himself was never to make more than a partial break with the USSR, and was led into the contradictory position of defining Russia as a degenerated workers' state. Leninist organisation with its hierarchies, its authoritarianism and its notions of leadership and subordination remained. "The leading cadre plays the same decisive role in relation to the party that the party plays in relation to the class" (11) writes Cannon, leader of the largest of the American Trotskyist groups, the Socialist Workers' party. There is the same intolerance to opposition: "Those who try to break up the historically created cadres of the Trotskyist parties are in reality aiming to break up the parties and to liquidate the Trotskyist movement. They will not succeed. The Trotskyist parties will liquidate the liquidators, and the SWP has the high historic privilege of setting the example". (12) These are the madmen that claim to be our leaders! The authoritarian structure of the parties is a reflection of the society they seek to create.

Another Trotskyist leader, Ernest Mandel, writes: "Anyone who believes that the mass of the imperialist countries are ready today to take over the running of the economy at once, without first passing through the school of workers' control, is deceiving himself and others with dangerous illusions." (13) More explicitly he writes: "The production relations are not changed so long as the private employer has merely been replaced by the employer state, embodied in some all power manager, technocrat or bureaucrat.... The classical solution is the succession of phases: workers' control (ie. supervision of the management by the workers), workers participation in the management; and workers self-management." (14). Like Lenin, the Trotskyists wish democracy and freedom away to a vague future 'when the workers are ready for it'. They also reduce it to an abstraction.

## 6. LENINISM - THE I.S. VARIANT.

The one revolutionary group in Britain which seemed to many to have learned the lessons of the failure of the Russian revolution, and attempted to be both Leninist and libertarian, was the International Socialists. Their emphasis on democracy within the party is shown in a book by three of their most prominent members - *Party and Class*. Here Duncan Hallas writes that a revolutionary party cannot possibly be created except on a thoroughly democratic basis, that unless in its internal life vigorous tendencies and shades of opinion are represented, a socialist party cannot rise above the level of a sect. "Internal democracy is not an optional extra. It is fundamental to the relationship between party members and those amongst whom they work." (15) In the same book Tony Cliff writes: "because the working class is far from being monolithic, and because the path to socialism is uncharted, wide differences of strategy and tactics can and should exist in the revolutionary party. The alternative is the bureaucratised party or the sect with its leader... Scientific socialism must live and thrive on controversy" (16) It seems odd that such democratic sentiments should co-exist with a total support for the Bolshevik practice during the Russian revolution. Even those members of I.S. who, like Peter Sedgewick argued that the degeneration of the revolution had occurred by 1918, attribute the decay to the "military depredation and economic ruin which wrought havoc in an already enfeebled Russia." (17) No mention of the Leninist view of the Party. Libertarian socialism and Leninism are incompatible - and the I.S. group has remained Leninist, and we have recently begun to see the results.

The stress on democracy within the group has been exposed as hollow. As early as 1971, the I.S. leadership reversed a *national conference* decision that the group should take a principled abstentionist position on Britain's entry into the E.E.C. Instead, they adopted a position of opposition to entry. The way in which the opposition groups like Workers Fight and the "Right Opposition" were expelled is startling in view of the group's previous emphasis on faction rights. Tony Cliff has abandoned his earlier position in "Party and Class" that "wide differences in strategy and tactics can and should exist in the revolutionary party" (18), and now holds that "I.S. is a voluntary organisation of people who disagree or agree within narrow limits" (19).

The libertarian rhetoric of a society based on workers' councils remains, but it is nothing more than a rhetoric. Certain questions are never raised, let alone answered. Will the factories be under workers' self-management during the 'transitional period'? Will the Workers' State be a federation of workers' councils, under the direct control of the working class (a libertarian idea), or will it be a centralised bureaucracy co-existing with workers' councils on the Yugoslav model (a Leninist idea)? What happens if there is a conflict between the centralised authority and the workers' councils? (When such a conflict occurred in Russia in 1917/18 and in Spain 1936/37 it was the councils who lost out). Above all, what will be the relationships of the vanguard party to the State, the Workers' Councils, and the working class? How will it avoid substitutionism? Cliff's argument in *Party and Class* that substitutionism can be stopped by a diligent leadership is completely inadequate.

## 7 THE LIBERTARIAN POSITION.

Nobody denies that the condition for revolution in Britain will be different from those that prevailed in Russia. However, the idea of a vanguard party remains, as does the danger that the "transitional period" will prove far from transitional. The idea that the working class can be liberated by a party - no matter how correct its line - is an abstraction. All that would happen would be the creation of a new ruling class, as has been seen in Russia and other "socialist" countries. The working class must liberate itself, as called for by Marx, and in doing so it will create the preconditions for the liberation of all oppressed groups from authority.

Our relationship to Leninist theory must be made clear. Leninism has its strengths as well as its weaknesses. Its recognition that working class consciousness is fragmented and generally under the hold of bourgeois ideology is essentially correct. While he underestimates how quickly workers can free themselves from authoritarian ideology, Lenin did recognise the importance of leadership. Anarchists must overcome their fear of the idea of leadership, and recognise that in any situation where people are confused, an anarchist will provide leadership where he or she advocates libertarian solutions. The difference is that whereas anarchist leadership consists of persuasion and agitation, the Leninist vanguard party seeks to go beyond agitation to actual political leadership through its control of the state. For the purpose of agitation on a national scale some type of organisation is necessary, and here also Leninism should be looked at more carefully. Lenin saw that the organisation of the party

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was determined by the authoritarian society in which it existed (though he did not see that the structure of a vanguard party determined the society which it created), and tried to solve the problem by adopting democratic centralism. Democratic centralism is suited for a vanguard party, but libertarianism must reject such a form of organisation which usually turns out to be more centralised than democratic. What is needed is an organisation with a high degree of theoretical clarity and a fully developed sense of responsibility towards other comrades, while at the same time maintaining a maximum of political discussion within the organisation. A central co-ordinating body is vital, though there must be complete and absolute control over it by the membership and its task should be minimal and clearly defined.

Some anarchists have criticised Lenin for his ruthlessness, but I believe that such a criticism should be rejected. Any successful revolution will be faced with the possibility of civil war and tremendous economic difficulties which it will be forced to meet ruthlessly if the revolution is to survive. In doing this it may be necessary to do some horrifying things such as killing ordinary workers who are fighting for the counter-revolution. But there will be qualitative differences between the libertarian and the Leninist attitudes. We are fighting for different aims, and so must reject policies like creating a secret police, prison camps and "red terror". Such policies would destroy revolutionary freedom. We must be prepared to accept defeat rather than engage in such actions.

Finally, we must recognise with Lenin that authority can only be defeated by authority. Lenin recognised that the State is an instrument of coercion by one class against another, and pointed out that a Workers' State will be necessary in the turmoil of revolution in order to coerce the bourgeoisie. Nevertheless, we must differentiate ourselves from Lenin's view of the State. To Lenin the state was a centralised republic co-existing with workers' councils, with the vanguard party controlling the centre. To libertarians, it is a decentralised federation of workers' councils under the direct and absolute control of the working class.

Such a state is one that begins to cease being a state almost immediately. It is not the institutionalisation of class oppression like the Leninist state, but the foundations of liberation. Since the concept of a workers' state is now fully associated with Leninism, and it is thereby simplified to become merely class oppression rather than being simultaneously the institutions of liberation which necessitates the dissolution of the State, anarchists reject the revolutionary society will have a state in its initial phase.

One thing we must reject clearly is the notion of a centralised vanguard party. The division of labour between those who rule and those who are ruled has lasted too long, and can only be ended by the self-emancipation of the working class. It is absolutely necessary that anarchists clarify their relationship to this self-emancipation, and the debate on organisation within the libertarian movement must develop in a clear and realistic direction.

## Notes

- (1) Chris Harman - Party and Class.
- (2) Engels - On Authority.
- (3) Lenin - What is to be done?
- (4) Lenin - Second Congress of the R.S.D.L.P.
- (5) Lenin - The Re-organization of the Party.
- (6) Lenin - The State and Revolution.
- (7) Ibid.
- (8) Osinsky - On the building of Socialism in Kommunist
- (9) Trotsky - Thirteenth Party Congress.
- (10) Trotsky - Our Political Tasks.
- (11) James Cannon - Factional Struggle and Party Leadership, in S.W.P. pamphlet in defence of the Revolutionary Party.
- (12) Ibid.
- (13) Mandel - Workers Control and Workers Councils.
- (14) Mandel - Marxist Economic Theory. Vol. 2.
- (15) Duncan Hallas - Towards a Revolutionary Socialist Party in Party and Class.
- (16) Tony Cliff - Trotsky on Substitutionism in Party and Class.
- (17) Peter Sedgwick - Victor Serge on Party and Class. in International Socialism 50.
- (18) Tony Cliff - Party and Class.
- (19) Cliff and Nagliatti - Main features of the programme we need in I.S. Internal Bulletin Jan 1973.

# SECTARIANISM: WHY IT'S NECESSARY

BY STEVE KIBBLE

Recent issues of Libertarian Struggle have devoted some space to analysing and attacking the role of I.S. in Teachers Rank and File. This kind of analysis is obviously necessary, yet many people who consider themselves vaguely left feel very uneasy when they read articles by one group attacking another. It's considered somehow distasteful, but above all it's *sectarian*, implying that the group has placed their own importance above that of the working class. There is some truth in this. Sections of the Maoist movement, differing on minor questions, label the others "conscious agents of imperialism" "fronts for the CIA", etc. All very good stuff for the sect collector but of very little use to anyone else, least of all the working class. There would appear to be two different types of sectarianism. The latter variety isn't sectarianism in the classic sense of the word, but then the definitions have spread a little.

The first definition i.e. sectarian proper is that which occurs between different groups vying for that much sought after position - "the leadership of the working class."

Since a study of all the set books can entitle one to this position, the situation rapidly becomes confusing. At the moment two particular groups have by their own vehemence at least attained this. One being the Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) and the other the Socialist Labour League. Since they hold this position, then clearly everyone else must not only be wrong, but consciously wrong, and thus "objectively being on the side of the ruling class." The patent absurdity of this position is obvious, but it continues to dominate the politics of these two groups. Among other less paranoid vyers for the leadership of the working class, the usual litmus paper test is who has the most members. At least this bears some relationship to reality and shows that their ideas do have credibility amongst the most advanced sections of the working class. But still the argument is couched in terms laid down by Lenin. There can only be one leadership which has defeated the others to create the monolithic, highly-centralised body that will lead them to the revolution. Then, since it represents the most advanced sections, it will rule in the transitional period between capitalism and full communism until the class is ready for full power itself.

The other kind of sectarianism and one that I would argue is totally necessary is attempting to differentiate between groups that appear to say the same thing and want the same objective, but whose practice, theory and methods of action are entirely different. Here one has to state quite specifically, using historical experience and present day analysis to show that there is a difference, and it can not only be seen to be a paper difference but one that has a direct bearing on the eventual emergence of a working class capable and willing to organise itself to overthrow capitalism and replace it with workers' power. Since there is a strong link between the way a group is internally structured, its method of operation (tactics), and its supposed aim, then everything is up for attack.

Libertarians have to be very aware of this. We are probably the smallest grouping active in the working class and thus the least effective. At this present time it is fairly easy to be an effective Leninist group with the working class, or at least the most class conscious elements in it, only recently being weaned away from the myth that social democracy truly "represents" the working class and can bring about social justice and equality. Our ideas are different from "follow us and see a new society created", and we have to show this very clearly in our ideas and in the kind of organisations that we wish to help to create in the working class. We believe that the working class should control society. This means what it says; not that the party, representing the most advanced sections, should control society. We believe in independent working class activity; not just independent of every group but us. We believe in rank and file movements in the unions; not in groups set up by group cadres with ready-made policies and papers laid down by a leadership that knows all the answers. We believe in learning from the class as much as trying to teach and initiate; not in making a token bow to participation. In all these our tactics should relate to our eventual aims. Likewise our organisation and its structure should relate to our tactics and aims. As we believe in free speech in the working class, so we believe in free speech in the organisation. We believe that minorities have the right to put their position, both internally and publicly, as long as it is clear that it is a minority viewpoint. We believe that no one group



of people should keep their knowledge to themselves, but in - stead, knowledge and experience should be shared and that those with less than others be encouraged to contribute as much as possible. We believe that no group should have the power of certain positions to dominate others. And so all positions are either mandated on a recallable basis or the necessary functions are rotated, both to avoid power positions and to spread experience..

All this helps to create an organisation that should be efficient and libertarian. There is a direct link between this and organising to create a society built the same way. Not that we seek to become the revolutionary microcosm of the working class - which is some kind of crypto-Leninist position. What is needed is a clear understanding and analysis of why actions are undertaken and why certain ideas are better than others. And why the essential differences between us and others need to be made clear.

Thus sectarianism is clearly necessary. And it is most necessary against those who appear to be close to us, but in fact are not. It is an easy matter to distinguish ourselves from reformism and its ageing stablemate, Stalinism. The difference between ourselves and the most authoritarian Trotskyist and Maoist groups are again fairly obvious. Where sectarianism is most needed is against groups like I.S. who have become adept at taking away selected portions of libertarian clothing in order to cover up the more unattractive parts of Lenin's body. Their cynical manipulation of so-called rank and file groups has to be attacked and attacked until there is a general realisation that rank and file does mean groups of autonomous workers organising in their own defence and putting forward their own ideas. And that the role of revolutionary organisation is to help this, not to use them to build up blocs in the unions to challenge the leadership and recruit en masse. In attacking I.S.'s political tactics it is quite valid to call in to question the structure of I.S. and how it has become far more centralised and how the National Committee would like to make it more so. Faction and tendency rights have been eroded away. There are proposals to regional committees from federal and delegate bodies into groups of the best cadres in the area as chosen by the National Committee. There are proposals to limit branches to only one resolution at conference and that based on the perspectives document drawn up by the National Committee. Note should also be taken of the physical intimidation of other left groups that I.S. seems to be indulging in - the beating up of a Red Weekly seller and others in Liverpool, the threatened doing-over of Big Flame. All this relates to the kind of politics that I.S. is currently pursuing in their hope to take up the place in the shade recently vacated by the Communist Party.

In short, we need to use sectarianism as a weapon to destroy any hold that groups dominated by theories of Leninism and reformism have over sections of the working class. That is what we are aiming to do, even if it is not usually phrased like that. If we believe in workers' power then those ideas stand in the way of the fulfilment of that belief. Not that we should fight them in the way that I.S. appears to be fighting its opponents i.e. literally, but fighting them by our argument and organisation and our willingness to learn.

## Publications

**Organisational Platform of the Libertarian Communists.** (ORA pamphlet) advance orders to **De Vrije**, 21, Binkhoeved Drive, Linthouse, Glasgow.

**Mole Express** Manchester voice of revolutionary struggle. News/reviews/exposes/graphics/features. 10p monthly from 7, Summer Terrace, Manchester M4 5SD.

**The Tyranny of Structurelessness** by Jo Freeman. Obtainable from **Leeds Women's ORA**, 29, Cardigan Rd., Leeds LS6 6-5p plus 3p post. 'Libertarians in all movements should study this pamphlet because it contains the core of the argument that ORGANISED libertarians have stated.' Review in April Libertarian Struggle.

**Front Libertaire** fortnightly paper of O.R.A. France. Sample copy from North London group, subscription details from 33, rue des Vignoles, 75020 Paris, France.

**Michael Tobin**, who was jailed for two years being in possession of leaflets calling on British Army soldiers to desert, has been released. He wishes to be contacted by fellow ex-prisoners, or prisoners, to organise a campaign against the British penal system. Contact Michael Tobin, P.O. Box 10638, Amsterdam, Holland.

**De Vrije** Socialist paper of the Dutch Libertarian Socialist Federation. For copies write to Jan Bervoets, Willem de Zwijgerlaan 104, Den Haag, Netherlands.

**Inside Story** the radical magazine which specialises in the stories Fleet St. won't print. For sample copy send 25p to Dept. AP 20, 3, Belmont Road, London S.W. 4

**Solidarity**, a paper for militants in industry and elsewhere, 6p, plus post from 123, Latham Road, London, E6

# Behind the economic crisis

by Al McNeillie

In Britain the world trends of slowing down in economic growth (apart from 1973) and a relative decline in productivity in the advanced industrial countries, a fall in profit margins, a decline in investment in important sectors of the economy, and the consequent galloping inflation as increased costs are passed on as higher prices, are intensified by a lack of competitiveness. This lack of competitiveness is a central feature of 20th century British and economic history. Britain's dominance of 1870 when her exports equalled a third of the world's total was gradually eroded mainly by the development of the U.S. and Germany as major industrial powers. By 1913 Britain's share had dropped to 13% - a decline which necessitated the imperialist war of 1914-1918 and the savage attacks on the working class in the immediate post-war years. This period culminated in the massive working class defeat of 1926 and the adoption of a depressed economy in the inter-war years. The main reason why there was no fascist solution to the problems of British capitalism was not because of the democratic and undogmatic nature of the British as is frequently asserted, but because the ruling-class had already defeated the workers in the General Strike and because the Wall Street crash had a minimal impact on Britain. The British economy was already depressed. The fact that standards of living have increased greatly since 1945 as a result of capitalist expansion in the West tended to disguise the reality of the situation. The truth of the matter was that Britain's position *vis a vis* her rivals continued to decline so that Britain now produces less than 4% of the world's output.

The slackening of the post-war expansion in the mid-1960's revealed Britain's weakness - a weakness which has been expressed in countless balance of payments crises, devaluations, and "stop-go" policies. If British capitalism is to be made competitive there are three imperatives: the raising of profit margins, the stimulation of investment, and, most importantly, a major attack on working-class standards of living and workers' organisations. These imperatives mutually reinforce each other. To take an example: one of the reasons for the lack of investment in British industry has been that British capitalists have often

preferred to invest in countries where there is a disciplined, low-paid labour force (as in South Africa) where profit levels are higher and there is little danger of the workers becoming "bloody minded." This the ruling-class and successive Labour and Tory governments have clearly realised. In recent years we have seen numerous aspects of this three-pronged strategy in operation - from productivity deals to attacks on the welfare state and council housing; from tax concessions to the rich "In Place of Strife" and the Industrial Relations Act; and finally, Heath's "Prices and Incomes Policy." The fact that the Tory government accepted the potentially crippling costs of Britain's entry into the EEC is an indication of how desperate is the position of British capitalism.

However, it has gradually emerged that the key factor in the equation

higher profits + greater investment + attack on working-class = expansion = restoration of British competitiveness is the attitude of the working class. The industrial and political strength of a strong, confident labour movement (I don't want to underestimate the limitations of the British working class movement but they will be discussed later) has repeatedly frustrated ruling class strategy. The unions sank Barbara Castle's 'In Place of Strife' the miners smashed the norm-1% strategy; rank and file initiative freed the London dockers - the first purely political strike since the General Strike - and has rendered the Industrial Relations Act innocuous (at least up till now). In short, the necessity to make British capitalism competitive requires the ruling class to wage ever more naked class war on the workers, and the working-class is not taking this lying down. Strikes are increasing in duration and in the numbers involved (see table below). Militancy has brought with it novel forms of struggle - the occupations, flying pickets etc., and tentative moves from rank and file trades unionists to break down the sectional differences that bedevil the trade union movement eg. the strike of the Birmingham engineers and their support of the miners which forced the closing of the Saltley coal depot. The most recent manifestation of this war of attrition in which both sides are slowly but clearly increasing the stakes, is Heath's Wage Freeze.



	Number of workers involved (000's)	Average number of days per worker on strike	Number of working days lost (000's)
1953-64 (average)	1,081	3.3	3,712
1965	876	3.3	2,925
1966	544	4.4	2,398
1967	734	4.0	2,787
1968	2,258	2.1	4,680
1969	1,665	4.1	6,876
1970	1,801	6.1	10,980
1971	1,171	12.1	13,551
Jan-Oct 1972	1,353	17.1	22,202

### THE FREEZE AND PROSPECTS FOR PHASE THREE

Phases One and Two have been largely successful for the Tories. Most trades unionists have sullenly accepted wage restraint, and those workers who have fought against it - civil servants, London teachers, gas and hospital workers - have been defeated. Profit levels are increasing (indeed so high that the Financial Times has called them "embarrassing"). There is evidence of increased investment in industry, and the Sunday Times reports that (*British industry is planning a massive surge of investment in new factories and new plant*) (1). The latest statistics show a productivity boom which seems to be in excess of 5% per annum. Nevertheless, the euphoria of the Tory press should not blind us to the fact that there are three very nasty storm clouds ahead for the government - world trends, balance of payments problems, and the inevitable breakdown of the Government - TUC talks with the resulting explosion of working-class anger this autumn and winter.

The I.S. group's economists are absolutely correct in stressing the re-emergence of the international trade cycle as a major factor in the world economic situation. The fact that the British economic revival is not unique must be recognised. The comment of "The Economist" they use to illustrate this deserves repeating: "*All major countries experienced record growth in the first quarter (of 1973) ..... Japan notched up a 15% rate, the United States the largest in any quarter since the Korean War, and Germany and France also raced ahead despite shortages of capacity and labour ..... orders everywhere are rising. Germany's overseas orders for heavy engineering were up by a third on a year ago. (But at the same time) inflation forecasts were less optimistic and growth everywhere will slow down next year ..... Now we all march in step national trends reinforce each other. So the 1974 slowdown could lead to a 1975 recession*" (2). A further recession seems almost inevitable in the next two or three years.

More immediately, Britain is going to face a massive balance of payments problem by the end of the year. British capitalism seems to be so structurally uncompetitive that it cannot even take advantage of successive devaluations of the pound and it is certain that in British conditions expansion, together with the frailty of the pound in the international money markets, precipitates a balance of payments deficit. The fact that since entering the Common Market the trade deficit with other member countries is increasing is an ominous trend. Already The Times has labelled the current expansion as "the boom which must go bust", and on this year's performance it is likely that by the end of 1973 Britain will be £1,000m. in the red. The floating pound gives a certain amount of elbow room to the Heath government, but whether it will be enough to avoid a major balance of payments crisis is extremely doubtful. A major crisis, of course, would necessitate a deflationary budget and an end to expansion - politically disastrous for the Tories.

Thirdly, and most importantly, the Tory government faces the probability of large scale industrial unrest this winter. The list of unions with wage claims pending is enough to frighten any government, let alone the present one whose position is so vulnerable. Miners, engineers, electricians, railwaymen and public service employees have put in for claims which the government cannot possibly concede, while Hull dockers are already mounting one-day strikes every week in pursuit of an £8 per week increase. The fear of such an explosion of working-class resentment has led the bosses' paper par excellence and defender of the principles of free trade - The Economist - to argue for food subsidies not because it may alleviate hardship but simply because it may take a little steam out of the battles to come this winter. The reasoning is this:

*"To suggest these schemes does not mean that any sort of government subsidy for either food or mortgages is desirable. The purpose has simply been to argue which variant of subsidy scheme would be least bad. In conditions of considerable external difficulty, the Heath Government does seem to be about to sponsor a reasonably sensible general economic policy ..... The worst outcome for the country this winter will be if that policy, and hopes for the cohesion of British society are destroyed by illegal strikes that enjoy too much tacit public support. The best outcome will be if the policy is effectively accepted and enforced by the public ..... In order to escape from the worst outcome towards the best it could be worth introducing some cosmetic illogicalities, if they would make what is said to be a harridan of a policy look more attractive and cheer people up."* (3)

However, clutching at straws like food subsidies and the remote possibility of agreement between the government and the TUC is useless. Partial concessions, threshold agreements, selective subsidies, amendments of the I.R. Act etc. may indeed win over some to supporting Phase 3, but it is hardly likely that anything short of a freeze on prices (which is impossible) will appease workers and postpone the inevitable confrontation for a few more months. The freeze was supposed to be part of an anti-inflation policy but the experience is that while their wages have been frozen, prices have continued to soar. Inflation, rising at nearly 10% per annum with food prices rising at nearly 20% is sure to continue at unacceptable levels. The choice for workers is a stark one: accept Phase 3 and what is effectively a wage cut - or fight back. Most workers are going to fight. A long and bitter confrontation over the next few months is a certainty.

### CONFRONTATION AND ORGANIZATION

The coming confrontation raises a whole series of questions about the nature of the British Labour movement and its ability to win the next battle in this war of attrition - not that victory or defeat for either workers or government is likely to

be decisive in the long term. It is interesting to recall the comments of Willie Gallagher and J.R. Campbell. Both were active in a remarkably similar situation to the present one - a crumbling economy, inflation, a period of heightened class war. They argued that the different levels of struggle demanded different forms of organization:

*"It was never so necessary as it is now for the workers' movement to submit itself to the most ruthless self-criticism. Old tactics and old methods of organization have to be overhauled and brought up to date to enable us to meet and overcome the latest developments of organization from the employers' side. Delay spells disaster. Everywhere the organization of the employers and its cat's paw government is being improved to meet all eventualities. If we do not counter these developments with improved organization, then the existing organizations will be no more able to deflect the employers from imposing industrial serfdom on us than a matchbox in the path of a steamroller could deflect it from its path."* (4)

Gallagher and Campbell here highlight a problem which is relevant to the present working class, particularly to industrial militants. In a period when strikes are national, involve increasing confrontation with the forces of the state, the forms of struggle developed during the 50's and the 60's - strong local shop-floor organization - are seen to be becoming inadequate. Trades union officials will become more prone to selling out their members, not because they are right-wing, nor because they are inherently treacherous, but because the objective social position of trades union officials, right and left alike, as a bureaucratic caste vacillating between bosses and workers, means that in a period of naked class war their social base is threatened. The problem facing militants is not so much a crisis in leadership (an idea which reformulates the problem but does not answer it) but rather an institutional and organisational crisis.

What is absolutely necessary is the development of organisational forms which correspond to the imperatives of the levels of struggle in the immediate future. What is needed is a form of organisation which can overcome the sectionalism and fragmentation of the British labour movement and the not infrequent isolation of individual militants, so that events like the intervention of the Birmingham engineers at Salfley becomes the rule rather than the exception. The possibility for such progress lies in rank and file groups. The patchy but encouraging growth of rank and file groups in various unions and combines organised around papers like *"The Collier"*, *"Carworker"*, *"Dockworker"*, *"Building Workers' Charter"* etc. provides a key to the solution of the immediate needs of militants.

Up and till now these rank and file groups, though they have begun to break down the problems of fragmentation and isolation of militants, have done little to face the problems faced by sectionalism. Nevertheless, it seems that the I.S. are going to make an attempt to weld them together into a national structure - the ambition being to bring together the already significant minority of militants in the working class into a new National Minority Movement. The Social Worker industrial conference at Manchester in the Autumn is expected to raise such perspectives. We must give critical support to the I.S. on this position as well as pressing for local committees of struggle which will generalise local struggles and facilitate victory in local situations.

Of course, there are real dangers in supporting the I.S. in this venture. Firstly, the attempt to form a new National Minority Movement may be doomed to failure because of the industrial strength of the C.P. and the continuing dominance of left reformist ideas among industrial militants. (There is evidence that the C.P.'s continuing accommodation to the twists and turns of left T.U. bureaucrats, particularly Scanlon and Jones, is increasingly coming into opposition with the needs of its industrial militants. For example, a number of C.P. militants

were bewildered by the policy of the Party in the building workers' strike where the leadership swung behind the UCATT bureaucracy, refusing to publish "Building Workers' Charter" and, as a finale, sending down a couple of hatchet men from King Street to silence C.P. members in Birmingham who were leading a campaign against the actual settlement! This is not to suggest that militants will leave the Party in droves but rather that there is a contradiction between the Party line and the needs of its militants, a contradiction that has to be exploited.) Secondly, there is the danger that I.S. may dominate and bureaucratise a national rank and file organisation as they have done in the Teachers' Rank and File where libertarians have had to form an opposition to fight bureaucracy and lack of democracy in the organisation so that Rank and File can fight bureaucracy and lack of democracy in the NUT. Thirdly, the whole thing may degenerate into an I.S. recruiting campaign. Finally, it is quite conceivable that a national rank and file organisation may itself become obsolete as an organisation of struggle, and that to lay too much emphasis on building such an organisation opens the way to an emphasis on means of struggle rather than on the ends of struggle.

However, there are problems which have to be faced on a theoretical and practical level sooner or later. The revolutionary left has to take on the C.P. on a political level in industry some time. One of the positive contributions libertarians can make in a rank and file movement at the moment is precisely the argument for democracy within the movement and pointing out the dangers of bureaucratisation. To confuse organisations of struggle against capitalism with institutions which can bring about socialism is a disastrous political position. We have to continually stress that a national organisation of rank and file militants is an organisational form corresponding to a particular level of struggle - no more, no less, and is certainly not a shadow federation of workers' councils.

The real question for libertarians is whether we want to become a credible part, however small, of the British labour movement. If we do, we have to participate in the establishment of a Minority Movement, whatever our reservations about the intentions of I.S. and the danger of creeping economism. To delay to postpone our decision, to adopt a wait and see approach, could well be a disaster. If we miss the boat this time, libertarian politics in Britain will consist of sterile sectarian wrangling, self-indulgent carping criticism of other groups, continuing isolation from the working class, and, at most, the formulation of formally correct positions without the ability or the influence to fight for our politics in the working class. The opportunities for the revolutionary left have never been greater - we can't afford to waste them.

#### FOOTNOTES.

(1) The Sunday Times. 29 July 1973.

(2) International Socialism 59.

(3) The Economist. 18 August 1973.

(4) Direct Action - An Outline of Workshop and Social Organization. Gallagher and Campbell.



## POSTSCRIPT

Heath's Phase 3 proposals were greeted in the bourgeois press with headlines like "it's more all round" and "it gives us some cheer", but careful examination shows that the Phase 3 restrictions are nothing but a disguised wage cut. For workers, the £2.25 ceiling is hopelessly inadequate given the rise in the cost of living. The productivity "bonus" will only come into effect three months after the increase, while the miserable 40p safety-net will only be given when the cost of living rises by 7%. Of course, the bosses have something to cheer about: controls on prices and profits - such as they were - have been relaxed.

The fact that Heath's only major concession in the Phase 3 package was the "flexibility" clause is indicative of the frailty of British capitalism and the vulnerability of the Tory government. Heath was unable to give selective food subsidies which could have provided the basis for a deal with the Trade Union leaders, but he did offer the "anti-social hours" clause as an attempt to buy off the miners. The Tories are being pulled in two different directions at the same time: on the one hand, they are terrified of the prospect of a major confrontation, particularly one led by the miners, while on the other hand, they are unable to provide the sort of measures (food subsidies etc.) which could prevent one.

More importantly, Heath had depended for the success of Phase 3 on the slowing down of inflation and the continuation of expansion. The energy crisis has rendered this impossible. The balance of payments problem (two record deficits in October and November), coupled with the energy crisis, has precipitated the capitalist crisis which would have occurred anyway in early 1975. The only solution for the Tories is a massive cutback in productivity and cutdown in consumer spending so that resources can be directed towards exports. Hence the three-day week and Barber's mini-budget.

As the crisis of British capitalism is intensified by the "competitive recession" of other capitalist nations the working-class is facing a slump whose effects could be worse than that of the 1930's. Consequently, political and organizational questions of the working-class movement are becoming increasingly more urgent. The coming struggle is likely to be decisive - a major defeat for the working-class will put back the movement years. The key political and organizational demands must be ones which unite the mass of the working-class on the basis of a combined onslaught on the Tory government. Revolutionaries must work for the immediate formation of local Councils of Action, composed initially of socialists and militants, whose immediate tasks would be to gain mass support through its intervention in and co-ordination of local struggles, and to prepare for a General Strike. We have to recognize that 1974 will be the year when the question of power will be the central issue. In these conditions the alternatives for the working-class and the revolutionary left are stark and brutal: lose and suffer a defeat potentially more disastrous than that of 1926, or start organizing for a General Strike and the establishment of institutions of proletarian power.

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# THE TWO OCTOBERS

BY PIOTR  
ARCHINOV

Translated by  
North London ORA

The victorious revolution of the workers and peasants in 1917 was legally established in the Bolshevik calendar as the October Revolution. There is some truth in this, but it is not entirely exact. In October 1917 the workers and peasants of Russia surmounted a colossal obstacle to the development of their Revolution. They abolished the nominal power of the capitalist class, but even before that they achieved something of equal revolutionary importance and perhaps even more fundamental. By taking the economic power from the capitalist class, and the land from the large owners in the countryside, they achieved the right to free and uncontrolled work in the towns, if not the total control of the factories. Consequently, it was well before October that the revolutionary workers destroyed the base of capitalism. All that was left was the superstructure. If there had not been this general expropriation of the capitalists by the workers, the destruction of the bourgeois state machine - the political revolution - would not have succeeded in any way. The resistance of the owners would have been much stronger. On the other hand, the objectives of the social revolution in October were not limited to the overthrow of capitalist power. A long period of practical development in social self-management was before the workers, but it was to fail in the following years.

Therefore, in considering the evolution of the Russian socialist Revolution as a whole, October appears only as a stage - a powerful and decisive stage, it is true. That is why October does not by itself represent the whole social revolution. In thinking of the victorious October days, one must consider that historical circumstance as determined by the Russian social revolution.



Another no less important peculiarity is that October has two meanings - that which the working masses who participated in the social revolution gave it, and with them the Anarchist-Communists, and that which was given it by the political party that captured power from this aspiration to social revolution, and which betrayed and stifled all further development. An enormous gulf exists between these two interpretations of October. The October of the workers and peasants is the suppression of the power of the parasite classes in the name of equality and self-management. The Bolshevik October is the conquest of power by the party of the revolutionary intelligentsia, the installation of its 'State Socialism' and of its 'socialist' methods of governing the masses.

## The workers' October

The February Revolution caught the different revolutionary parties in complete disarray and without any doubt they were considerably surprised by the profound social character of the dawning revolution. At first, no one except the Anarchists wanted to believe it. The Bolshevik Party, which made out it always expressed the most radical aspirations of the working-class, could not go beyond the limits of the bourgeois revolution in its aims. It was only at the April conference that they asked themselves what was really happening in Russia. Was it only the overthrow of Tsarism, or was the revolution going further - as far as the overthrow of capitalism? This last eventually posed to the Bolsheviks the question of what tactics to employ. Lenin became conscious before the other Bolsheviks of the social character of the revolution, and emphasized the necessity of seizing power. He saw a decisive advance in the workers' and peasants' movement which was undermining the industrial and rural bourgeois foundations more and more. A unanimous agreement on these questions could not be reached even up to the October days. The Party manoeuvred all this time between the social slogans of the masses and the conception of a social-democratic revolution, from where they were created and developed. Not opposing the slogan of petit- and grand-bourgeoisie for a Constituent Assembly, the Party did its best to control the masses, striving to keep up with their ever-increasing pace.

During this time, the workers marched impetuously forward, relentlessly running their enemies of left and right into the ground. The big rural landowners began everywhere to evacuate the countryside, fleeing from the insurgent peasantry and seeking protection for their possessions and their persons in

the towns. Meanwhile, the peasantry proceeded to a direct re-distribution of land, and did not want to hear of peaceful co-existence with the landlords. In the towns as well a sudden change took place between the workers and the owners of enterprises. Thanks to the efforts of the collective genius of the masses, workers' committees sprang up in every industry, intervening directly in production, putting aside the admonishments of the owners and concentrating on eliminating them from production. Thus in different parts of the country, the workers got down to the socialization of industry.

Simultaneously, all of revolutionary Russia was covered with a vast network of workers' and peasants' soviets, which began to function as organs of self-management. They developed, prolonged, and defended the Revolution. Capitalist rule and order still existed nominally in the country, but a vast system of social and economic workers' self-management was being created alongside it. This regime of soviets and factory committees, by the very fact of its appearance, menaced the state system with death. It must be made clear that the birth and development of the soviets and factory committees had nothing to do with authoritarian principles. On the contrary, they were in the full sense of the term organs of social and economic self-management of the masses, and in no case the organs of State power. They were opposed to the State machine which sought to direct the masses, and they prepared for a decisive battle against it. 'The factories to the workers, the land to the peasants' - these were the slogans by which the revolutionary masses of town and country participated in the defeat of the State machine of the possessing classes in the name of a new social system which was founded on the basic cells of the factory committees and the economic and social soviets. These catch-words circulated from one end of workers' Russia to the other, deeply affecting the direct action against the socialist-bourgeois coalition government.

As was explained above, the workers and peasants had already worked towards the entire reconstruction of the industrial and agrarian system of Russia before October 1917. The agrarian question was virtually solved by the poor peasants as early as June-September 1917. The urban workers, for their part, put into operation organs of social and economic self-management, having seized from the State and the owners the organizational functions of production. The October Revolution of the workers overthrew the last and the greatest obstacle to their revolution - the state power of the owning classes, already defeated and disorganized. This last evolution opened a vast horizon for the achievement of the social revolution,

putting it onto the creative road of socialist reconstruction of society, already pointed at by the workers in the preceding months. That is the October of the workers and the peasants. It meant a powerful attempt by the exploited manual workers to destroy totally the foundations of capitalist society, and to build a workers' society based on the principles of equality, independence, and self-management by the proletariat of the towns and the countryside. This October did not reach its natural conclusion. It was violently interrupted by the October of the Bolsheviks, who progressively extended their dictatorship throughout the country.

## The Bolshevik October

All the statist parties, including the Bolsheviks, limited the boundaries of the Russian Revolution to the installation of a social-democratic regime. It was only when the workers and peasants of all Russia began to shake the agraro-bourgeois order, when the social revolution was proved to be an irreversible historical fact, that the Bolsheviks began discussing the social character of the Revolution, and the consequent necessity of modifying its tactics. There was no unanimity in the Party on questions of the character and orientation of the events which had taken place, even up to October. Furthermore, the October Revolution as well as the events which followed developed while the Central Committee of the Party was divided into two tendencies. Whilst a part of the Central Committee, Lenin at its head, foresaw the inevitable social revolution and proposed preparation for the seizure of power, the other tendency, led by Zinoviev and Kamenev, denounced as adventurist the attempt at social revolution, and went no further than calling for a Constituent Assembly in which the Bolsheviks occupied the seats furthest to the Left. Lenin's point of view prevailed, and the Party began to mobilize its forces in case of a decisive struggle by the masses against the Provisional Government.

The party threw itself into infiltrating the factory committees and the soviets of workers' deputies, doing its best to obtain in these organs of self-management the most mandates possible in order to control their actions. Nevertheless, the Bolshevik conception of, and approach to, the soviets and the factory committees was fundamentally different from that of the masses. While the mass of workers considered them to be the organs of social and economic self-management, the Bolshevik Party looked on them as a means by which it was possible to snatch the power of the sinking bourgeoisie, and afterwards to use this power to serve the interests of the Party. Thus an enormous difference was revealed between the revolutionary masses and the Bolshevik Party in their conceptions and perspectives of October. In the first case, it was the question of the defeat of power with the view of reinforcing and enlarging the already constituted

organs of workers and peasants self-management. In the second case, it was the question of leaning on these organs in order to seize power and to subordinate all the revolutionary forces to the Party. This divergence played a fatal role in determining the future course of the Russian Revolution.

The success of the Bolsheviks in the October Revolution - that is to say, the fact that they found themselves in power and from there subordinated the whole Revolution to their Party - is explained by their ability to substitute the idea of a Soviet power for the social revolution and the social emancipation of the masses. A priori, these two ideas appear as non-contradictory for it was possible to understand Soviet power as the power of the soviets, and this facilitated the substitution of the idea of Soviet power for that of the Revolution. Nevertheless, in their realization and consequences these ideas were in violent contradiction to each other. The conception of Soviet power incarnated in the Bolshevik state, was transformed into an entirely traditional bourgeois power concentrated in a handful of individuals who subjected to their authority all that was fundamental and most powerful in the life of the people - in this particular case, the social revolution. Therefore, with the help of the 'power of the soviets' - in which the Bolsheviks monopolized most of the posts - they effectively attained a total power and could proclaim their dictatorship throughout the revolutionary territory.

This furnished them with the possibility of strangling all the revolutionary currents of the workers in disagreement with their doctrine of altering the whole course of the Russian Revolution and of making it adopt a multitude of measures contrary to its essence. One of these measures was the militarisation of labour during the years of War Communism - militarisation of the workers so that millions of swindlers and parasites could live in peace, luxury and idleness. Another measure was the war between town and country, provoked by the policy of the Party in considering peasants as elements unreliable and foreign to the Revolution. There was, finally, the strangling of libertarian thought and of the Anarchist movement, whose social ideas and catchwords were the force of the Russian Revolution and orientated towards a social revolution. Other measures consisted of the proscription of the independent workers movement, the smothering of the freedom of speech of workers in general. All was reduced to a single centre, from where all instructions emanated concerning the way of life, of thought, of action of the working masses.

That is the October of the Bolsheviks. In it was incarnated the ideal followed by decades by the revolutionary intelligentsia, finally realised now by the wholesale dictatorship of the All-Russian Communist Party. This ideal satisfies the ruling intelligentsia, despite the catastrophic consequences for the workers; now they can celebrate with pomp the anniversary of ten years of power.



## The Anarchists

Revolutionary Anarchism was the only politico-social current to extol the idea of a social revolution by the workers and peasants, as much during the 1905 Revolution as from the first days of the October Revolution. In fact, the role they could have played would have been colossal, and so could have been the means of struggle employed by the masses themselves. Likewise, no politico-social theory could have blended so harmoniously with the spirit and orientation of the Revolution. The interventions of the Anarchist orators in 1917 were listened to with a rare trust and attention by the workers. One could have said that the revolutionary potential of the workers and peasants, together with the ideological and tactical power of Anarchism could have represented a force to which nothing could be opposed. Unhappily, this fusion did not take place. Some isolated Anarchists occasionally led intense revolutionary activity among the workers, but there was not an Anarchist organization of great size to lead more continuous and co-ordinated actions, (outside of the Nabat Confederation and the Makhnovchyna in the Ukraine). Only such an organisation could have united the Anarchists and the millions of workers. During such an important and advantageous revolutionary period, the Anarchists limited themselves to the restricted activities of small groups instead of orientating themselves to mass political action. They preferred to drown themselves in the sea of their internal quarrels, not attempting to pose the problem of a common policy and tactic of Anarchism. By this deficiency, they condemned themselves to inaction and sterility during the most important moments of the Revolution.

The causes of this catastrophic state of the Anarchist movement resided in the dispersion, the disorganisation and the absence of a collective tactic - things which have nearly always been raised as principles among Anarchists, preventing them making a single organisation all step so that they could orientate the social revolution in a decisive fashion. There is no actual advantage in denouncing those who, by their demagoguery, their thoughtlessness, and their irresponsibility, contributed to create this situation. But the tragic experience which led the working masses to defeat, and Anarchism to the edge of the abyss, should be assimilated as from now. We must combat and pitilessly stigmatise those

who, in one way or another, continue to perpetuate the chaos and confusion in Anarchism, all those who obstruct its re-establishment or organisation. In other words, those whose actions go against those efforts of the movement for the emancipation of labour and the realisation of the Anarchist-Communist society. The working masses appreciate and are instinctively attracted by Anarchism, but will not work with the Anarchist movement until they are convinced of its theoretical and organisational coherence. It is necessary for everyone of us to try to the maximum to attain this coherence.

## Conclusions and

## Perspectives

The Bolshevik practice of the last ten years shows clearly the counter-revolutionary of their dictatorship of the Party. Every year it restrains a little more the social and political rights of the workers, and takes their revolutionary conquests away. There is no doubt that the 'historic mission' of the Bolshevik Party is emptied of all meaning and that it will attempt to bring the Russian Revolution to its final objective: State Capitalism of the enslaving salariat, that is to say, of the reinforced power of the exploiters and at the increasing misery of the exploited. In speaking of the Bolshevik Party as part of the socialist intelligentsia, exercising its power over the working masses of town and country, we have in view its central directing nucleus which, by its origins, its formation, and its life-style has nothing in common with the working-class, and despite that, rules all the details of life of the Party and of the people. That nucleus will attempt to stay above the proletariat, who have nothing to expect from it. The possibilities for rank and file Party militants, including the Communist youth, appear different. This mass has passively participated in the negative and counter-revolutionary policies of the Party, but having come from the working-class, it is capable of becoming aware of the authentic October of the workers and peasants and of coming towards it. We do not doubt that from this mass will come many fighters for the workers' October. Let us hope that they rapidly assimilate the Anarchist character of this October, and that they come to its aid. On our side, let us indicate this character as much as possible, and help the masses to reconquer and conserve the great revolutionary achievements.

# NOTES ON RUSSIAN STATE CAPITALISM

by Peter Newell

THE RULERS of Russia, and their paid hacks, have recently been celebrating "fifty years of the USSR", and extolling the virtues and advantages of "socialism" in that country. Mankind has been fed, and has believed, many myths; but the one that has proclaimed "socialism" in Russia is probably one of the greatest and most pernicious ever perpetrated. Such lies have been exposed by libertarian socialists and many anarchists, not merely since the formation of the so-called Union of Soviet Socialist Republics fifty years ago, but within weeks of the Bolsheviks assuming power. As myths die hard, it will not come amiss if we remind ourselves of what has been said.

Even before the coming to power of the Bolsheviks in Russia, Peter Kropotkin exposed the arguments of the "State Socialists" and Social Democrats, including the supporters of Lenin, that they could - by their methods and policies - bring about genuine socialism or communism. In his MODERN SCIENCE AND ANARCHISM he writes: *"We see in the organisation of the posts and telegraphs, in the State railways, and the like - which are represented as illustrations of a society without capitalists - nothing but a new, perhaps improved, but still undesirable form of the wages system. We even think that such a solution of the social problem would so much run against the present libertarian tendencies of civilised mankind, that it simply would be unfeasible. We maintain that State organisation, having been the force to which minorities resorted for establishing and organising their power over the masses, cannot be the force which will serve to destroy these privileges."*

Kropotkin called such an arrangement STATE CAPITALISM.

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As early as April, 1918, Lenin admitted that the Bolsheviks had jettisoned "the principles of the Paris Commune", and claimed in his LEFT-WING COMMUNISM - AN INFANTILE DISORDER that "State Capitalism would be a step forward with the present state of affairs in our Soviet Republic."

Furthermore, the charge that the Bolsheviks (now calling themselves Communists) had introduced "State Capitalism" rather than "proletarian socialism" soon became a major and recurrent theme among anarchists and, to some extent, Social Revolutionaries and a few Menshevik Internationalists such as J. Martov. The Briansk Federation of Anarchists, in their jour-

nal, VESTNIK ANARKHII (July 14 1918) were about the earliest critics of Lenin's State Capitalism. They were soon followed by "M.Sergven" (generally assumed to be a non-descript Grigori Maksimov) in the September 16 issue of the journal, VOL'NYI GOLOS TRUDA, in a long article entitled "Paths of Revolution". The article was a severe indictment of the Bolsheviks' so-called dictatorship of the proletariat, which had in fact merely resulted in the substitution of State Capitalism for private capitalism. The workers and peasants, he claimed, now found themselves under the heel of a new class of administrators and bosses. What had taken place in Russia, the article went on, resembled, and was similar to, the earlier bourgeois revolutions in Western Europe; *"No sooner had the oppressed farmers and craftsmen of England and France removed the landed aristocracy from power than the ambitious middle-class stepped into the breach and erected a new class structure with itself at the top; in a similar manner, the privileges and authority, once shared by the Russian nobility and bourgeoisie has passed into the hands of a new ruling class composed of Communist Party officials, government bureaucrats and technical specialists."*

Under the centralised rule of Lenin and his Party, concluded "Sergven", Russia entered a period of State Capitalism rather than socialism. "State Capitalism was the new dam before the waves of our social revolution". The writer of the article, then lamented that the anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists were too poorly organised, to keep the revolution from being diverted into non-socialist and non-libertarian channels. The Russian people had begun the revolution spontaneously, but lacked the libertarian organisation to carry it further, or to stop the Bolsheviks and State "socialists" from getting power and taking control. The expression "State Capitalism" was used by the anarchists to designate the concentration of political power, together with State ownership of the means of production. The State had become the exploiter in place of a multiplicity of private capitalist concerns. The workers remained slaves - wage slaves of the State.

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This was brought out sharply during the Kronstadt revolt in March, 1921. An article in the Kronstadt IZVESTIYA VREMENNOGO REVOLYUTIONNOGO KOMITETA of March 8 clearly analyses the situation in Russia at that time. The writer (who was probably Petrichenko) says;



*"After carrying out the October Revolution, the working class hoped to achieve its emancipation. But the result was an even greater enslavement of the human personality. The power of the police and gendarme Monarchy passed into the hands of the Communist usurpers, who, instead of giving the people freedom, instilled in them the constant fear of falling into the torture chambers of the CHEKA....."*

*"But most infamous and criminal of all is the moral servitude which the Communists have inaugurated; they have laid their hands also on the inner world of the toilers, forcing them to think in a Communist way. With the help of the bureaucratised Trade Unions, they have fastened the workers to their benches, so that labour has become not a joy but a new form of slavery."*

Hopefully, the writer concludes;

*"The workers and peasants steadfastly march forward, leaving behind them the Constituent Assembly, with its bourgeois regime, and the dictatorship of the Communist Party, with its CHEKA and its State Capitalism, whose hangman's noose encircles their necks and threatens to strangle them to death. The present overturn at last gives the toilers the opportunity to have their freely elected Soviets, operating without the slightest force of Party pressure, and to remake the bureaucratised Trade Unions into free associations of workers, peasants and the labouring intelligentsia. At last the policeman's club of the Communist autocracy has been broken."*

Unfortunately, it was not yet to be.

IN 1926, Archinov, Malmo and Ida Mett returned to the subject in their "Organisational Platform". They rightly pointed out that the seizing of power, through a so-called Socialist Party, and the organising of a so-called "Proletarian State", cannot serve the cause of emancipation. *"The State, immediately and supposedly constructed for defence of the Revolution, invariably ends up distorted by needs and characteristics peculiar to itself; itself becoming the goal, produces specific, privileged castes on which it depends....."* It subsequently re-establishes the basis of a new Capitalist Authority and State, with the usual enslavement and exploitation of the masses.

Also in exile, Maximov on a number of occasions condemns the Communist rulers of Russia for imposing, and developing, a bureaucratic State Capitalist regime. And in his EUROPEAN IDEOLOGIES: A SURVEY OF TWENTIETH-CENTURY POLITICAL IDEAS, Rudolf Rocker observes;

*"In Russia, where the so-called dictatorship of the proletariat has ripened into reality, the aspirations of a particular Party for power have prevented any truly socialistic reorganisation of economic life, and have forced the country into the slavery of a grinding State Capitalism."*

At this point, however, it is fair to mention that not all anarchists have categorised the Soviet Union as State Capitalist. In the main, "professional" anarchists, such as Alexander Berkman, Emma Goldman and Voline were never able to analyse the form of society that emerged and developed in Russia." Voline generally referred to it as "State Socialism", and Berkman, as late as 1929, when he was writing his ABC OF ANARCHISM, still imagined that the Bolsheviks wanted communism, but that unlike anarchists, they hoped to impose it on the workers. The so-called professional revolutionaries, like Goldman and Berkman, took a long time in becoming really disillusioned with Bolshevik "communism". They never really appreciated that, with its State ownership of the land and means of production, its highly differentiated wages system and its primitive accumulation of (State) capital, Russia was merely developing - in a bureaucratic State form - what the West had developed years before - capitalism!

And it is this - State Capitalism - that the rulers of the so-called USSR have been celebrating; not socialism or genuine communism. The revolution for free or libertarian communism is yet to be. That will be the Third Revolution advocated by the Russian anarchists since 1918.

\* In Britain, long-standing anarchists and contributors to FREEDOM are still just as much at "sixes and sevens" regarding the nature of the Soviet system. More than one writer thinks it is communism!

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# Reviews

## THE TYRANNY OF STRUCTURELESSNESS

by Jo Freeman, published by Leeds Women's ORA, price 5p

"In the Women's Liberation Movement a great emphasis has been placed on what are called leader-less structureless groups as the main organisational form of the movement. The idea of 'structurelessness' however has become a goddess in its own right. Contrary to what we would like to believe, there is no such thing as a structureless group, because the idea of 'structurelessness' does not prevent the formation of informal structures, but only formal ones. Unstructured groups may be very effective in getting women to talk about their lives; they aren't very good for getting things done."

The point is a good one, well worth making, but by itself it is not worth 5p, nor the effort put into producing this pamphlet, in which the basic theme is repeated, restated, reiterated, and elaborated for eleven pages. It concludes with some useful steps towards structuring groups democratically, but one is still not sure why Leeds Women's ORA found it worth so much of their time and attention.

My main criticism is the same as theirs, as stated in their excellent introduction. The pamphlet deals purely with organisation, and, as the Leeds women say, "The mutual intersection between theory, practice and organisational form is so strong that you cannot discuss any one in isolation." Obviously it is possible to give the main emphasis to one of these, but the author of 'The Tyranny of Structurelessness' nowhere allows her own social or political ideas even to be implicit, and consequently has little to say about practice. Her analysis of informal group structures has some interesting insights, but in general it so lacks any point of reference to reality as to be of little practical value. Establishing a form of organisation without a basic theory is like writing a poem (however lyrically), without a meaning. Both, alas, are only too common.

The Leeds sisters' other criticism of this pamphlet is that it lacks a criticism of traditional, hierarchical forms of organisation (as examples they give "Leninist groups, present Trade Unions, local councils) and how they work. This leads on logically from the first objection. Authoritarian organisations reflect an authoritarian view of society. If we reject one we must reject the other. This is something that needs to be worked out in detail so that the implications can be clearly understood. If the Leeds sisters do so, as they intend to, they will be filling in a considerable gap in our understanding.

The Leeds introduction and the brief notes on the British Women's Liberation movement ('The Tyranny of Structurelessness' is by a member of the American movement) seem more likely to provide points for consideration by those interested in the attempt to develop a genuinely non-authoritarian organisation, than the main body of the pamphlet ever will. It is to be regretted that the Leeds women have spent their time in reissuing a vague, verbose paper of such limited relevance, when they could be producing something of their own of real value, not just for Women's Liberation, but for the whole libertarian left.

Jill Walker (Manchester Women's Liberation)

## THE POLITICS OF HOMOSEXUALITY

By DON MILLIGAN (Pluto Press 23p)

As an introduction to the politics of homosexuality this pamphlet is not a success. The issues are raised, but not detailed and there is throughout a defensive attitude towards the 'gay consciousness'.

The key is found (p. 15) in an apologetic sentence that, "...the gay movement can make little practical contribution to the labour movement. We can't strike or organize tenants' associations ..." It would seem that the pamphlet produced by Cile Milligan as a statement in defence of his position, is mainly directed at his IS comrades, who have criticised him for daring to 'come out' while remaining an IS member.

The Gay movement, as with other movements against specific areas of capitalist oppression outside the narrow industrial struggle (blacks, women, claimants etc.) has developed in isolation from the political left, the left having had nothing to say to it. Such acceptance as the black and women's movements have achieved among the cadres of the vanguards (who remain overwhelmingly white, male and assumed heterosexual) has been through their own efforts, their own strength, forcing reluctant recognition. This has seen the end of overt racism and male chauvinism in the left press, and a willingness to regard blacks, women - and now claimants - as valuable recruiting fodder provided they can be pigeonholed as "black workers", "women workers", "unemployed workers". That is, acceptance of the movements but not their ideological questioning of bourgeois values.

And yet gays have not yet, in Britain, reached even this level. Left groups such as IS and (especially) SLL can still be violently anti-gay, they are dismissed - as women and claimants were before them - as unimportant, "petty-bourgeois" deviations from the class struggle.

Perhaps the left may soon recognise the problems of "gay workers" but it is unlikely that they will yet face up to the role of sexuality - including gay sexuality - in social revolutions. But rejection of the 'gay' consciousness by revolutionaries will inevitably lead to what could be called "gayism" - an analysis which while maintaining a revolutionary position, exaggerates the importance of gayness to "the struggle".

Such tendencies already exist in the women's (Rad. Femmes) and claimants' ("Claimantism" - eg Keith Paton) movements, and both are marked by a specific rejection of the traditional worker-orientated left.

Cile Milligan makes a valid point when he says that "Homosexual liberation ... is not guaranteed under socialism" (p. 14). Revolutionaries must examine all their thinking to destroy traces of bourgeois ideology, a point largely ignored hitherto. Any revolution which retains bourgeois prejudices and "morality" (including sexual attitudes) carries the seeds of its own self-destruction.

M.D. & J.W.



## "THE MULTINATIONALS"

(Pelican 50p) by Christopher Tugendhat.

Apart from an introduction for the Pelican edition this Tugendhat's 1971 book, but it has certainly appeared in paper back at the appropriate moment when the public is becoming very aware of the power of multinational companies. It deserves a wide readership, although the author as a former Conservative M.P. and leader writer for the "Financial Times", is definitely one of the enemy, he has gathered together in readable form some enlightening information.

Multinationals are very large companies which produce and sell their goods in different usually far-flung countries. Examples are Ford, IBM and Shell. They have the striking characteristic of being under strict central direction with the subsidiaries all working within a framework established by an overall group plan drawn up at headquarters. Central direction with such huge organisations depends for its effectiveness on rapid and reliable air travel, an efficient telephone, telegraph and telex system, and computers capable of handling a mass of information. Multinationals have an important place in the industrial and economic life of most powerful nations and occupy leading positions in key manufacturing industries. They have increased in importance rapidly over the last twenty-five years: between 1946 and 1969 the book value of American foreign direct investments rose from 7,200 million dollars to 70,763 million dollars. As a result, U.S. companies now account for an estimated 60 to 65 per cent of all foreign direct investment. By 1980 it is estimated that foreign-owned internationals will account for about half of total exports of many Western European countries, and locally-owned internationals for much of the rest. Prof. Perlmutter believes that by 1985 world industry will be dominated by 200 or 300 very large international companies responsible for the greater part of industrial output.

This poses several problems for governments. The most dramatic is speculation. Money flows "like giant waves from one country to another," remarks an EEC official, and these waves are beyond the control of governments. The pace and direction of the money movements within each multinational group is directed by the central headquarters of the group. During two days prior to German revaluation in 1971 two thousand million dollars were exchanged into German marks. Ford's has an economist, according to Tugendhat, who has been right with 69 of his 75 forecasts of when devaluations will occur! More

vital in the longer term is the multinationals' power to decide on investment. This when a company can select whichever country offers the best industrial, economic sales and political prospects for its new plants and facilities. A government very anxious to secure a large investment running into several hundreds of millions of pounds can alter certain rules of the game to attract the investment. Companies which have the power to allocate markets, have freedom of choice where to invest and make it known that strict tax controls are not an attractive feature of a country's organisation, are unlikely to be treated favourably.

On tax, multinational companies tend to employ one set of experts to discover what the tax rules are and another set to advise on how to get round them. Additional investment is not encouraged in countries where pressure from tax officials is over zealous.

Trade unionists have become very alarmed at the power of multinational companies over the work force. Ford's workers were reminded during their month long strike in 1969 that production and new investment could be switched to plants abroad. The other side of this coin is that the strike at Fords of Britain had within a week led to the laying off of 2,000 men in the Belgian Ford plant. Whilst 89 million dollars worth of production was lost in Britain, 26.4 million dollars worth was lost in Belgium and Germany. Another factor in this area is that companies fear large profits will provoke large wage claims from trade unions so by book-keeping they keep the level of subsidiaries' profits in certain countries at a modest level. The companies have a huge advantage over trade unions in that they have access to all the companies' international figures whilst the trade union has to make do with national subsidiaries' figures only.

Tugendhat mainly excludes the relation of multinational companies to the Third World, concentrating on the developed, industrialised countries. This helps to make his book compact but the missing area is so vital in the source of raw materials that it strikes this writer that if Counter-Information Services could supply a comprehensive world survey of multinationals they would be doing an essential, if onerous, job. Another mind-boggling factor Tugendhat misses is the coming energy crunch. At one stage he muses on what would happen if IBM went bankrupt, governments suddenly being faced with many thousands of unemployed men, but imagine the results of the bankruptcy of the oil companies and the motor car manufacturers, both leading multinationals extremely vulnerable to the world scarcity of oil, and see where it leads you!

JERRY WESTALL

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